

**KEY CONCEPTS IN USMAN AWANG'S SHORT STORIES:
DEVELOPING A CRITICAL TRADITION**

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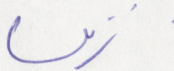
**A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
of the Australian National University**

March 1999

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is 100,000 words in length exclusive of endnotes, bibliographies and appendices.

This thesis represents the original research of the author, except where otherwise due acknowledgements are made.



(MOHAMAD MOKHTAR ABU HASSAN)

March 1999

To
my wife, Suzana
and daughters
Nurul Nabilah, Nurul Naqibah and Nurul Nazurah

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The idea to study Usman Awang's short stories by using the 'keywords' approach was suggested by my main supervisor, Professor Dr. Virginia Hooker. The exercise has been rewarding and enlightening. For this, I would like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to her. I would also like to thank her for her boundless patience and for giving up her valuable time in supervising my work, for her thoughtful comments, for guiding and advising me in every aspect of my thesis and for generously lending me her books and documents during the course of writing this thesis. At the crucial stage, she constantly and painstakingly rendered all the assistance I needed. Above all, I really appreciate her friendship and concern for me and my family.

I also would like to express my warmest and sincere thanks to my co-supervisor, Dr. George Quinn for his valuable opinions and suggestions at the early stage of my candidature while my main supervisor was on sabbatical leave. My warmest and sincere thanks too, to my adviser, Dr. Khasnor Johan, who gave me useful suggestions, advice and guidance in writing my thesis especially at the crucial stage when she gave her valuable time and effort to check my work. I will always be indebted to them.

I am very much indebted to those individuals besides my supervisors and adviser who have helped me in other ways. Firstly, I would like to thank Dr. Gail Craswill of Study Skills Unit, for her constructive suggestions and tremendous help in the organization of the work. To Elisabeth Kat, Garry M. Collins, Christine Campbell, Marshall Clark, Dr. Wendy Mukherjee, Dr. Tim Hassall, Mabel Bell, Radin Ariff and Aida Mokhtar, I owe my gratitude for their help with my English.

To the staff of the Southeast Asia Centre and also to my fellow post-graduate students at the Faculty for helping me to complete my study, I wish to express my gratitude for their friendship. I am also grateful to Greg Young who assisted me with the computer when I had a problem.

I am very grateful to the various institutions from which I obtained materials for my thesis. These institutions are the Library of the University of Malaya; the Library of the Academy of Malay Studies, University of Malaya; the Library of the National University of Malaysia, Bangi; the Library of *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka*, Kuala Lumpur; the National Archives, Kuala Lumpur; the National Library, Kuala Lumpur; the Menzies and Chiefly Libraries, the Australian National University and the National Library, Canberra.

I am particularly indebted to the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur for granting me with study leave, salary, an allowance and all the expenses from October 1995 to March 1999 to pursue my studies at the Australian National University. I would also like to express my gratitude to Professor Anthony Milner, Dean of the Faculty of Asian Studies, the Australian National University for providing me with a grant for my field work in Malaysia.

To my former student Abdul Razak Mohd. Kassim and my colleagues at University of Malaya, Mrs. Rohani Yusof and Mrs. Indirawati Zahid; and Mrs Rohani Rustam and Mrs. Masittah both from *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka*, Kuala Lumpur for providing me with relevant material for this study, I would like to express my thanks here. Thanks are also due to Professor Dr. A. Wahab Ali, Professor Dr. Mohd. Yusof Hasan, Associate Professor Dr. Abdul Rahman Kaeh, Associate Professor Kamaruzzaman Abdul Kadir, Haji Adi Taha and Zulkifli Jaafar both from National Muzium, Kuala Lumpur for their help and moral support.

Last but not least, my warmest thanks also goes to my late father, Allahyarham Haji Abu Hassan Jamil; my mother, Hajjah Gayah Tasib; and members of the family, relatives and friends for their prayers and blessings. To my wife Suzana and children, Nurul Nabilah, Nurul Naqibah and Nurul Nazurah, I extend my gratitude and love for their understanding in forgoing time with me for the accomplishment of this study.

ABSTRACT

This thesis discusses the key issues in the thinking of Usman Awang, a leading Malay intellectual writer, as expressed in his short stories. As a Malay writer, Usman naturally wrote mostly about Malay society. Yet, while being narrowly focused, his stories could be said to have a wider appeal for they are about societal change. Taken as a whole, his stories depict a Malay society whose traditional values and way of life were being challenged by circumstances and changes around it. Within this scenario, Usman saw his role not merely as a writer who related stories about this challenge, but also as an active participant, a protagonist, urging Malays to change or risk being left far behind in the race towards modernity.

Thus, through his short stories, Usman raised a variety of social issues which reflected the problems and challenges faced by Malay society. Of these, five in particular, dominated his attention, namely the concept of '*bangsa*', poverty, justice, leadership and death. I have identified a small lexicon of keywords Usman used in his short stories to convey his ideas about these five issues. It is through social language that certain concepts of Malay society can be understood. In this thesis, I argue that by analysing keywords in Usman Awang's short stories, the author's views and his ideal model of Malay society can be better understood.

His views and his ideal model of Malay society was sometimes ahead of his time. This places him in the position of a writer with a mission. In giving his ideas and vision, Usman developed a distinctive style of writing and a critical approach to portray the realities of Malay society. When he criticised his society, he used colourful and graphic words. Sometimes he was direct in his criticism, but at times he was indirect using idioms, dialogues and questions to criticize people or institutions whom he believed to be impeding the change that he was seeking for society. In a society which regarded criticism of authority as subversive. His style of criticism is therefore of considerable interest and forms a major part of this study.

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A NOTE ON PRESENTATION AND MALAY SPELLING

All sources in 'jawi' (Arabic script) which have been romanised follow the system 'Daftar Ejaan Rumi Bahasa Malaysia', the standard orthography of the language. For instance the word *ڤنديق* is spelt '*pendek*' not '*pendik*' and *سڤوچق* is spelt '*sepucuk*' not '*sepuchok*'.

All Malay words and quotations in the thesis are italicized and in single quotes, for instance '*bangsa*', '*misikin*' or '*pemuda harapan bangsa*' and '*masih ada faham peringkat dan bergolong-golongan, bertinggi rendah, berdesa berkota, berkaya dan bermisikin*'. All English quotations are in double quotes, for instance "destroy oppression" or "to defend the nation and country".

Place names follow official Malay usage and not English. For instance Melaka not Malacca and Johor not Johore.

All translations into English and Malay romanisations unless otherwise acknowledged, are my own.

INTRODUCTION

Malay Literature in Malay Society

Scholars since Plato, Louis de Bonald, Rene Wellek and many others have argued that literature as a social expression portrays the world-view of a certain society. One wide-ranging perspective supports "the documentary aspect of literature, arguing that it provides a mirror to the age".¹

Even before Malaya became independent on 31 August 1957, Malay literature was held in high regard as a reflection of society, and taken seriously by politicians, academics and others. There has been much interest in the representation of reality in fiction and authors' social role through their literature. In the 1950s, there was a public debate about the relationship between Malay literature and society, and from the First Malay Language and Literature Congress in 1952 until the Third Malay Language and Literature Congress in 1956, the role of literature in society was debated extensively. At this Third Congress held in Singapore and Johor Bahru, Keris Mas, one of the leading writers of the time and a member of ASAS 50 (*Angkatan Sasterawan 50* or Generation of the Writers of the 50s), presented an overview of Malay literature based on 'the criteria of the author's closeness to society'. He said:

Literature should stem from the suffering and the struggles of society and should become a prime tool for guiding the thoughts and spirit of the people towards independence, prosperity, security and peace. Literature must result from the author's interaction with society and ... language and concepts (*fikiran*) in literature should constitute its form and content as art.²

In this regard, Virginia Hooker, a leading scholar of Malay literature, has described the writings of ASAS 50 as particularly apt examples of the Malay belief that literature is 'the mirror of society' (*cermin masyarakat*). As a reflection of society, of perceptions, concerns and aspirations of the Malays, the literature of the ASAS 50 writers provides rich material for the historian of ideas and society.³

As a result of the Third Language and Literature Congress and pressure from writers, a National Language and Literature Agency, *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* (DBP) was officially inaugurated in Johor Bahru on 10 March 1957. It was through the literary magazines, journals and books produced by *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka*, that "Malay writers and critics established their position in Malay political culture", believing that "literature arises from the social concerns of writers".⁴

Usman Awang, one of Malaysia's most respected writers, reinforces the fundamental link between literature and society:

Literature does not exist in a vacuum. Literature as a mirror of society and a place for the expression of human sentiments is born from society and its people, from people who live in a particular society and at a particular time.⁵

This thesis will focus on Usman Awang and will analyse selected features of his short stories. In order to appreciate his contribution to Malay writing it is important to understand the literary context in which he worked.

The Literary Context: The Development of the Short Story in Malay

One of the main factors which sparked the development of modern Malay literature was the printing press introduced by the Europeans in the 19th century. As a result of this technological development, printed works appeared, and with the advent of printing, literature could be distributed widely to readers. Thus, the activity of story-telling which was popular in traditional Malay society expanded into a new medium when newspapers and magazines were published.⁶

The first Malay language newspaper to appear in the Malay Peninsula was *Jawi Peranakan* in 1876. From 1876 onwards, the publication of newspapers and magazines flourished to the extent that by 1929 there were 63 periodicals and in the 1930s there were 82 periodicals. From 1876 until 1941, that is before the Second World War, 153 newspapers and magazines were published in the Malay Peninsula. Some of these periodicals appeared daily, others weekly, but most were monthly or yearly publications.⁷ Newspapers and magazines were significant in providing for the publishing and development of short stories, which came to be regarded as 'newspaper literature' (*sastera persuratkhabaran*).⁸

As newspapers mostly focussed on contemporary issues in the areas of economics, politics and the social, these issues then provided inspiration for writers to write short stories. Thus, short stories played an important role in the effort to grapple with the problems and issues of contemporary Malay society in the periods of 1920-1941, during the Japanese Occupation (1942-1945), and in 1946-1950. At the same time, short stories helped focus authors' thoughts on the contemporary issues of these periods.

i. Pre-War Period (1920-1941)

From the time the first Malay language newspaper appeared in the Malay Peninsula, newspapers tended to publish articles of local or general interest and excerpts from foreign papers to add to the readers' knowledge. Later, correspondence columns were more given to controversies on points of language and the correct way of writing '*syair*' (poems). Throughout World War One and for a few years after it "one or other of these literary battles raged furiously".⁹ Since the early years of the century, newspaper editors had been urging Malays "to take their share in the activities of modern life"¹⁰ by contributing stories to newspapers that could become moral lessons and examples to society, rather than folk tales or stories of the supernatural which were not credible to modern readers of that period.¹¹ Then on 4 February 1920, the first short story, entitled "*Kecelakaan Pemalas*" (The Misfortune of a Layabout) written by Nor Ibrahim, was published in the Kelantan magazine *Pengasuh*.¹²

Over the period 1920-1941, Malays began to develop an awareness of the concept of the short story. Thus, since the 1920s, we come across the word '*cerita*' or '*cetera*' (story) as a term for '*cerita pendek*' (short story). The push for short stories with didactic elements as well as realistic characterization of ordinary people came about because for Malays to modernize, they needed to face the reality of life without losing their sense of identity or their moral values. Therefore, it was important for Malay readers to be given advice so that their attitude and thinking would become progressive.

During this period, many Malays left their villages in rural or coastal areas to seek employment in towns and cities. The transition from the traditional life-style of the village to the different demands of urban living was difficult for many. It was felt that urban life with its opportunities for socializing and its cash-economy provided a wide range of temptations for 'simple' village folk. Thus, the theme of moral decline occasioned by city living took on importance. In short stories such as "*Gelombang Hidup*" (The Ups and Downs of Life) published in *Bulan Melayu*, May 1931, "*Hantu Judi atau Isteri yang Berbakti*" (The Gambler or A Devoted Wife) published in *Warta Kinta*, 24 December 1937 - 14 January 1938 and "*Kerana Dansing*" (Because of Dancing) published in *Majlis*, 27 - 28 November 1940, the temptations of urban life are described. "*Gelombang Hidup*", for example, portrays the life of a village youth, Osman, who is married to Saadiah and has a son. Osman's attitude changes and he indulges in gambling and drinking which were regarded by Malay society as negative traits. His behaviour becomes worse when he goes to Singapore where he continues to gamble and also keeps a mistress. He finally realizes his mistakes after being seriously ill for three months and so he returns to the family fold. The writer attempts in this story to highlight the impact of these types of negative behaviour on an individual and his family. The writer of

"*Gelombang Hidup*" represents the city not as a symbol of positive progress but as a dangerous place where the immorality associated with gambling, drinking, night clubs, women, prostitutes and the like, prevails and causes harm to individuals, families and society.

Most of the short story writers, who worked as teachers and journalists and who came from rural backgrounds, became sensitive to the problems which flowed from social freedom, gambling, night clubs and other activities associated with negative behaviour. These writers saw their role as having a social purpose by exposing social ills and problems, besides guiding society towards a better life. As a form of creative art, short stories are often used as vehicles for channelling the writer's thoughts, besides being mirrors of the life of society of a certain period. As Mohd. Taib Osman, a leading Malay scholar of Malay literature points out :

Literature was regarded more as a medium for expressing the writers' ideas about things closely related to his life and his society. Whatever his affiliations - be he religiously oriented or the Malay educated elite, or an English educated nationalist he did not treat the novel or short story as a literary form but as a medium to express his thoughts.¹³

Some writers focussed on the backwardness of the Malays, especially in the areas of education and business. In comparison to the immigrant races, such as Chinese and Indians who were brought in by the British in the early 20th century to work in the mining areas and rubber plantations, the Malays' standard of living was lower. So the theme of education also became prominent in short stories such as "*Berpantang Mati Sebelum Ajal*" (Death is Taboo Before the Appointed Time) by Muhammad Dahlan Masud, published in *Utusan Zaman*, 5 April 1941; "*Isteri yang Berbahagia atau Ibu yang Berjasa*" (The Happy Wife or the Dedicated Mother) published in *Warta Ahad*, 11-25 May 1941 and "*Hindun Seorang Murid yang Miskin*" (Hindun, A Poor Student) by Ariffin, published in *Utusan Zaman*, 16-23 August 1941. For example, in the story "*Berpantang Mati Sebelum Ajal*", Muhammad Dahlan Masud describes the importance of education for Malay children. The writer hopes that the rulers and the wealthy Malays will co-operate for the establishment of an education fund so that Malay students can receive education in all fields.

The writers mentioned above set out to arouse the awareness of Malay readers concerning the importance of education if they wished to progress in different fields. In this regard, they showed that education was not just a concept relating to broadening of knowledge, but rather a practical means to improve social status so that Malay society would have as good a standard of life as the non-Malays. With hindsight, the stories may appear simple because they were written for people who are only beginning to develop a tradition of buying books, magazines and newspapers for reading. As newspapers and

magazines particularly had attracted Malay readers, this medium was used for literature too. Thus, short stories became an appropriate genre for newspapers. By guiding Malays towards development, these writers indirectly aroused the spirit of 'ethno-nationalism'¹⁴ among the Malays.

Even though ethno-nationalism among the Malays had actually arisen earlier, it was not until the 1940s that political themes were increasingly explored by short story writers. This was as a result of Malaya still being under British colonial rule, with many Malays during that period actively struggling for the independence of their country. This led to the formation of several Malay nationalist organizations such as KMM (*Kesatuan Melayu Muda* or Young Malays Association), PKMM (*Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya* or Malaya Malay Nationalist Party), API (*Angkatan Pemuda Insaf* or Generation of Aware Youth), AWAS (*Angkatan Wanita Sedar* or Generation of Aware Women) and UMNO (United Malays National Organization). Furthermore, as Hashim Awang, a scholar from the University of Malaya, points out, the question of Malay nationalism became more obvious "after the Malay political organizations flourished, particularly in the states of Pahang, Selangor, Perak, Negeri Sembilan and Province Wellesley between 1937-1939", all of which sought independence for the country.¹⁵

The theme of anti-colonialism thus began to emerge in short stories such as "*Di Sini Kita Bukannya Orang Dagang*" (Here, We Are Not Foreigners) published in *Utusan Zaman*, 15 June - 6 July 1940, "*Nasib Pengarang Muda*" (The Fate of a Young Writer) published in *Warta Ahad*, 11 August 1940 and "*Nasib Penganjur Melayu*" (The Fate of the Malay Organizer), published in *Warta Ahad*, 20 October - 3 November 1940. In the short story "*Nasib Pengarang Muda*", for instance, the anonymous author presents Ajmain, the central character, as a young Malay nationalist who arouses the spirit of Malay nationalism through his writings. As his activities threaten the British colonial government, Ajmain is caught and exiled to Hong Kong for 10 years. Even though Ajmain's desire for the independence of his country is unfulfilled, the writer depicts Ajmain as feeling he has a responsibility to promote ethno-nationalism among Malays through his writings, and sees that his role is also very important for the country.

This reveals that writers had begun to be concerned about the effects of British colonialism on their country. For them, their motherland should be freed from colonial rule so that Malaya could be governed by its own people. This spirit of freedom continued to receive expression in short stories written during the Japanese Occupation of Malaya.

ii. The Period of Japanese Occupation (1942-1945)

The Japanese Occupation of Malaya had a significant impact on Malays and Malay literature. During the early stage of their Occupation, encouraged by the slogan 'Asia for the Asians', many Malays, who had felt oppressed under British colonial power, initially welcomed the Japanese arrival. Later, they began to realize that the slogan provided the Japanese with a pretext to conquer Southeast Asia. This had a strong impact on the thinking of Malays so that the Japanese were no longer to be considered friends but enemies.

As soon as the Japanese gained power, they quickly controlled the mass media, and the printing of newspapers and magazines was taken over. Censorship boards were also set up. As a result, according to Arena Wati, a prominent Malay writer, only 25 short stories were published during this time in the few newspapers and magazines still publishing, such as *Matahari Memancar*, *Cermin Hidup*, *Sinaran Matahari*, *Semangat Asia* and *Fajar Asia*.¹⁶ In addition, government censorship boards had been set up and only short stories with Japanese propaganda were allowed to be published. As a result, most of the short stories appeared to promote the Japanese Great East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere with its slogan 'Asia for the Asians'.

Although not many short stories were published in this period, there were some that contained rousing appeals for national awakening because of the effects of turbulence and upheaval that resulted from Japanese administration and exploitation of the country. In this regard, literature was used as "a political tool".¹⁷ For instance, at the beginning of the short story "*Dari Taiping ke Syonanto*" (From Taiping to Singapore), published in *Semangat Asia*, March 1943, the writer portrays the characters as proud of the success of the Japanese who defeated the British army. Then the story describes the fortitude of a Malay youth named Ahmad who willingly sacrifices his life to defend the dignity of his race and country from colonialism. For the sake of his race and motherland, he willingly leaves his lover, Annie Wong before his wedding day, to serve as an army volunteer in Singapore. Before he leaves for Singapore, he says to his lover:

Annie, you know I am a Malay youth with dreams for himself and for his race which is looked down upon by other races. We are regarded as a stupid and backward race, a race fit only to be preserved in zoos or museums. Now my motherland is in the midst of war and I hope to raise the status of my race, the Malays - the sons of this soil.

The story ends with the reunion of the two lovers. In this short story, the writer is boosting the morale of the Malays and indirectly ridiculing the Japanese for their cruelty and occupation of Malaya which, in the context, carries an implied criticism of the Japanese administration.

A similar idea is implicit in the short story "*Hujan Mas di Negeri Orang*" (Showers of Gold in Foreign Countries) a work by Ishak Haji Muhammad published in the Japanese sponsored publication *Semangat Asia*, February 1943. The story depicts the battle of Pahang warriors led by the legendary Pahang hero, Datuk Bahaman against the British army. They have to struggle in the jungle with insufficient food and weapons for the sake of their race and motherland. Basically, the story seems pro-Japan. However, indirectly the story reveals the writer's aspirations to arouse the nationalistic and patriotic spirit of the Malays in opposing the colonial powers, including the Japanese, as can be seen from several of the characters' dialogues:

"Me ? Don't be concerned about me. I am with you. I went into battle, seven times, three times I was hurt. And now I am craving to hear the canons fire, to see the spears fly, and blood flow".

"If you leave me and continue the fight, this means a major sacrifice, a sacrifice for your motherland".

We can see that during this period, strong political motivations were impelling the writers of short stories. Indeed, the short stories from the Japanese Occupation show the true aspirations of their writers, especially regarding the concept of the sovereignty of a country. Even though Malay short stories were supposed to be written as a form of Japanese propaganda, these did not embody the Japanese government's objectives. Instead, the writers wrote short stories to indirectly arouse the spirit of nationalism among Malays, to free the country from Japanese colonial power. The return to British rule at the end of the Second World War meant, however, that the freedom from foreign rule that the Malays sought was not achieved. For this reason, the fight for independence of the country from colonial power continued to be the theme of many of the short stories produced by Malay writers in the post-war period.

iii. Post-War Period (1946-1950)

After the Second World War, there was a rapid growth in the printing and publication fields in Malaya. This influenced the spread of newspapers and magazines, and between 1945 and 1950, 44 newspapers and magazines were published.¹⁸ The main reason for this growth was the involvement of periodicals in politics. Furthermore, the period between 1946 and the 1950s was a turbulent one for West Malaysia (then Malaya) which began with the British political attempt to impose the Malayan Union on 1 April 1946. This was a crucial period for the Malays concerning their own race and country, with Malays from all areas of society being united against the British colonials. As a result, UMNO (United Malays National Organization) was formed on 11 May 1946 as a pan-Malay political party. This was followed by the communist insurgency which led to the Emergency (1948 - 1960), the struggle for independence and finally the independence

of Malaya in 1957. Such historical events, occurring within this period "did not fail to attract the attention of the Malay intellectuals",¹⁹ which included Malay writers such as Usman Awang. Many became themselves directly involved.

After the surrender of the Japanese to the British on 15 August 1945, Malay writers realized that they had an important role in building a new society. The main objective of the post-War writers was to free society after war and colonization, to raise the standard of living and to educate the people. Consequently, there were many short stories that aroused the spirit of nationalism, revealed the restlessness and suffering of the masses and criticized injustice in society.

In the short story "*Tetap Merdeka*" (Forever Free), for example, published in *Utusan Zaman*, 2 February 1949, Keris Mas portrays a character named '*dia*' who, with other Malays, attends a congress where several nationalist leaders give spirited speeches about the struggle in defence of their motherland and for the independence of their country. One of the speeches inspires '*dia*' :

We will not stop struggling as long as our hope for the independence of race and homeland has not been achieved. People who desire independence will have it.²⁰

On returning home from the congress, '*dia*' is still infused with a strong nationalistic spirit and hope that independence will be achieved (*dengan tekad sekali menyeru merdeka tetap akan merdeka*). Through the character '*dia*', Keris Mas indicates that Malay youths should be willing to die for the independence of their country.

In addition, concerned Malay writers of the period also wrote short stories focussed on current issues of pressing social relevance, such as the Communist Emergency in Malaya. Among the important short stories are "*Wasiat Orang Bangsawan*" (The Last Testament of a Noble Person) published in *Suluh Malaya*, 1 June 1946 and "*Kejadian dalam Estet*" (Incident on the Estate) published in *Mastika*, April 1950 written by Keris Mas.

In "*Kejadian dalam Estet*", Keris Mas portrays the difficult life of the people during the Emergency. The story also depicts the day-to-day survival of the poor Malays who lived in rural areas. Bedul, a central character and a symbol of Malay youth, has to return to his own village where he works as a Special Police Constable (SC) ambushing the communists and guarding the estate owned by the British. While he is ambushing communists, Bedul is shot and seriously injured, so that he has to be sacked from his job. His life becomes even more painful after his wife is shot dead by the communists.

During the Malayan Emergency, Usman Awang, whose short stories are the focus of this study, was a member of official jungle patrols which ambushed communist terrorists. This experience is depicted in some of his short stories, such as "*Kami yang Terlibat*" (We Who Are Involved) published in *Cerita-cerita Pendek DBP*, 1958, "*Kenangan Jauh*" (Nostalgia) published in *Mekar dan Segar*, 1962, "*Dari Johor Baharu ke Kota Tinggi*" (From Johor Baharu to Kota Tinggi) published in *Degup Jantung*, 1963, and "*...dan Maut Mengendap di Mana-mana*" (...and Death is Lurking Everywhere) published in *Penulis*, January 1964. These short stories depict the turmoil of the Emergency, the difficulties of the people during this period and the tragedies which occurred during the ambushes of the communists.

By the late 1940s, when Usman Awang began to write, the short story had achieved recognition as a channel for Malay writers to express their ideas and raise their voices for changes which they thought were necessary in their society. Thus, the short stories that were published were regarded "as the voice and living experience of society of Malay writers".²¹ Usman strongly believed that, as a writer, he was not only a story teller portraying what was happening in society, but that he should also give his views, opinions, comments and visions. In his own words, he believed literature, which included the short story, was "a product of a writer's view or a writer's vision of society in this period and in the future".²²

Usman Awang as a Short Story Writer

Usman Awang is recognized by both Malaysian and international scholars as a leading Malay writer. Even though he is best known as a poet, he is also a talented writer of short stories and his contribution to the development of Malay short stories is regarded as important. Many of his short stories are of a high standard and have won prizes. For instance, "*Kami yang Terlibat*" (We Who Are Involved) won third prize in the competition of short story writing organized by *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* in 1957. In 1983, his short story "*Sebuah Khemah Didirikan*" (A Tent is Put Up) written in 1963, was regarded by the panel of Malaysia National Literary Awards as "the highest achievement of Usman as a short story writer".²³ His first short story was "*Surat Norlia yang Akhir*" (Norlia's Last Letter) published on 10 April 1949. Between 1949 and 1980, Usman produced 81 short stories which are the focus of this study.

Most of Usman's short stories were written during the period of British colonization in Malaya and immediately after Malayan independence, and he often draws on his own experiences for the creative material. For example, during his career as a policeman in 1947-1951, he experienced the stresses of life as a policeman. This

experience was depicted in several of his short stories, such as "*Mulanya Dia Menjadi Mata-mata*" (Why He First Became a Policeman), "*Surat dari Seorang Mata-mata*" (A Letter from a Policeman), "*Kopral Tua*" (Old Corporal) and "*Tugas*" (Duty). He portrays his experience as a journalist in *Utusan Melayu* (1952-1961) in the short story "*Sebuah Khemah Didirikan*" (A Tent is Put Up). His short stories about poverty such as "*Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua*" (The Fate of an Old Mother), "*Ayah tak Kembali*" (Father is Not Returning Home) and "*Uda dan Dara*" (Uda and Dara) also draw on his own deprived childhood.

In October 1951, Usman Awang became associated with ASAS 50 (*Angkatan Sasterawan Lima Puluh* or Generation of Writers of the Fifties) where the writers shared their social responsibility for using art as a tool in their struggle for racial unity and independence of the country. In this regard, Usman also played an important role by writing several short stories on these themes, such as "*Cinta di Negara Hang Tuah*" (Love in the Land of Hang Tuah) and "*Sepintas Lalu di dalam Bas*" (A Glance in the Bus). As a sensitive writer, he was disturbed by suffering, social injustices, cruelty, oppression, irresponsibility and untrustworthiness, which he depicts in most of his short stories.

Usman takes advantage of the role of short story as a vehicle for social and political comment. He also worked as a journalist and published all of his short stories in newspapers or journals. In most of his short stories, he criticizes the weaknesses in Malay society. Usman Awang develops the convention of creating characters whose behaviour arouses strong feelings in the reader. Many of those characters are either rich or from the aristocracy and they treat their fellow Malays with cruelty and contempt. The reader is thus positioned to feel a lack of sympathy with these unfeeling and high-handed characters and sympathy for their victims. As we read his short stories, it becomes clear that Usman Awang is not only writing to provide positive role models for Malays but that he is targeting particular aspects of Malay society for critical comment.

The Aims of this Study

The purpose of this study is to identify key issues in the thinking of Usman Awang as a Malay intellectual. His writing indicates that he was very concerned with the condition of Malay society and he expressed this in much of his writing, especially his short stories. His concern is evident particularly in the way he describes oppression and class difference in his fictional works. It is also the aim of this study to establish a method for analysing the relationship between keywords in Usman Awang's short stories and his

representation of Malay society. Examining this relationship will establish a basis for understanding Usman Awang's ideal model of Malay society.

The short stories provide evidence that Usman has his own distinctive conception of society. I am using the term 'concept' in the sense of "a fundamental notion in the study of knowledge"²⁴ which "is spoken of as an entity within one's head, a private entity, a product of the imagination that can be conveyed to others only by means of language, gesture, drawing, or some other imperfect means of communication".²⁵

This study also hopes to show how Usman develops his style in expressing the complex realities of Malay society and transforms these through his imaginative creativity so that his readers reflect on their own society and behaviour. Malay society does not value direct criticism and, traditionally, opinions which are critical of the established order are expressed indirectly. In this regard, Usman's style of criticism is therefore of considerable interest and it will be one of the aims of this thesis to analyse the development of a critical discourse in his writings.

This thesis hopes to contribute to a better understanding of a leading Malay intellectual's perception of his own society, as well as the expression of social criticism in his writing. It also contributes to an understanding of his development as a writer.

The Method: A Keywords Approach

Every language has its own keywords and these keywords reflect the core values of the culture and society to which this language belongs. Keywords, as first presented in Raymond Williams' book *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*²⁶, can be understood as a shared body of words and meanings that can be socially and culturally grouped. From 141 words, Williams analysed certain issues and problems, such as "the available and developing meanings of known words" and "the explicit but as often implicit connections which people were making" particularly in the formation of meaning.²⁷ Consequently, cultures and society can be revealingly studied, compared, and explained to outsiders through their keywords.²⁸ This is true of the Malay language which Usman used in writing all of his short stories. Usman does have his own keywords and one cannot understand Malay and Usman's conceptual world without understanding the concepts encapsulated in these words. Often for one Malay keyword, there is a cluster of English words.

The keywords approach has already been applied to Indonesian material.²⁹ In order to explore the concepts of the state in Indonesia's New Order, Michael van

Langenberg, in his article "Analysing Indonesia's New Order: A Keywords Approach" was able to show that a keywords approach is a useful methodology for analysing the structure of the Indonesian state as the interaction of five major facets, namely: power, accumulation, legitimacy, culture and dissent. He has shown that a model of the state, and a framework for its analysis, can be constructed from a relatively small lexicon of keywords taken from the political language of the state. He has also shown that analysis of all the keywords is essential to construct and understand the totality of the Indonesian state-formation. In other words, the structure of the Indonesian state can be analysed through its own indigenous discourse, that is through its own language.

Thus, van Langenberg's work is relevant to my study in which I have identified a small lexicon of keywords from Usman's short stories to access key concepts relating to the social dimension. These keywords are: '*bangsa*' (race, nation), poverty, justice, leadership and death, words commonly used in the ideological discourse of Malay society itself. It is through its social language that certain concepts of Malay society can be understood within the social order in which they are found. This can be related to Usman's own view of language. Usman pointed out the importance of language for the writer because to him "language is the main factor and symbol which links the writer and his society, as a tool for expressing his feeling, his race, and the happiness and the sadness of his society".³⁰ This further shows the importance of analysing words of the Malay language from Usman's short stories in order to better understand his view of Malay society.

The keywords mentioned above are analysed in the context of Usman's short stories, and the social context of the time, as a means of identifying his way of conceptualising Malay life. The key concepts are usually used to analyse Malay society and explore the systems they represent and the ideology which underlies them. They are keywords in the sense that: "they are significant, binding words in certain activities and their interpretation; they are significant, indicative words in certain forms of thought," which are "bound together (with) certain ways of seeing culture and society" and bound up with the issues and problems discussed.³¹

Roger Fowler has stressed in his book *Literature as Social Discourse: The Practice of Linguistic Criticism*, that "literature is a kind of discourse, a language activity within a social structure like other forms of discourse".³² His approach stresses the interpersonal and institutional dimensions of literature, concentrating on those parts of textual structures which reflect and which influence relations within society. In this regard, there is a link between a writer and society because a writer lives in society where he belongs and he expresses in texts what he sees in society and presents his ideas about a 'new society'. Thus "a text is treated as a *process*, the communicative interaction of

implied speakers and thus of consciousness and of communities".³³ Obviously, the relationship between Malay literature and Malay society has been overt and conscious. Considerable research has been published on the links between Malay literature and society, such as that done by Ungku Maimunah, Ismail Hussein and Mohd. Taib Osman.³⁴ This research has shown how much Malay writers are concerned with reflecting social issues. More recently, scholars have shown that analysing Malay texts, historical as well as literary, can be useful in understanding the dynamics of Malay society. Anthony Milner's book, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya: Contesting Nationalism and Expansion of the Public Sphere*,³⁵ is a good example, where he uses Malay texts to study the concept of politics and the invention of politics in both post-colonial and post-communist states in Malaya. I also profited from reading Virginia Matheson Hooker's article entitled "Developing a Rhetoric for Malay Society: The Writings of the Generation of the 1950s (ASAS 50)".³⁶ In this article she discusses the formation and aims of the ASAS 50, and through the essays of its members, she examines its ideologies, ideals and concerns; and analyses several short stories of three ASAS 50 writers. Another of her articles was also very useful for my study, "Concepts of Malay Ethos in Indigenous Malay Writings".³⁷ In this article she examines Malay writings in an attempt to discover how Malays expressed their identity as a people, the uses of the term '*Melayu*' (Malay) in different contexts and the concept of 'Malayness'.

During the 20th century it is clear that Malay writers and critics "have been reflecting on the social role of literature, showing particular interest in writers who conveyed their concern for their society in their writings".³⁸ Usman Awang as a member of ASAS 50 "held strong views about the relationship between literature and society and between literature and the soul of the people". His view is related to ASAS 50's slogan 'Arts for Society', "the declaration of their conviction that literature must be committed to helping society".³⁹

In addition, I have also been influenced by the work of George Lakoff in his book *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind*.⁴⁰ Lakoff attempts to bring together some evidence for the view that reason is embodied and imaginative - in particular, evidence that comes from the study of the way people categorize things. Conceptual systems, he argues, are organized in terms of categories, and most, if not all of our thought, involves those categories. For instance, some of these are categories of things or beings in the physical world, such as chairs and zebras. Others are categories of activities and abstract things, such as singing and song, voting and government. Things are in the same category if they have certain properties in common. And the properties they have in common are taken as defining the category. His argument is relevant here because there are clusters of words with common properties in each of the key concepts ('*bangsa*', poverty, justice, leadership and death) investigated in this study.

The keywords approach identifies key concepts and maps the development of those concepts as they are expressed in Usman Awang's short stories. Because Usman Awang believed his works could contribute to Malay society and its future, then Fowler's concept of literature as a process which is useful to locate the short stories in their social context has contributed to the way in which the short stories are analysed in the thesis. Lakoff's work on conceptual systems and categories has extended Raymond Williams' keywords approach. Because the Malay keywords encompass clusters of related ideas, then Lakoff's definition of categories has allowed greater flexibility when examining complex Malay concepts such as '*bangsa*' and 'leadership'. In this way the work of Williams, Fowler and Lakoff have helped refine the approach to an analysis of keywords in Usman Awang's short stories.

The Significance of the Research

Although Usman Awang is recognized as a leading Malay writer, full attention has not yet been given to his short stories. This is because he is better known as a poet than a short story writer. In fact, no previous attempt has been made to collect all his short stories, which are mostly written in '*jawi*' (Arabic script). Such a collection is not an easy task, however, because some of the newspapers which published his short stories have ceased publication and are difficult to find. This difficulty is compounded by the fact that he wrote under a variety of pseudonyms, such as Tongkat Warrant, Atma Jiwa, Adi Jaya, Zaini, Manis, Setiabudi and Pengarang Muda.

The nearest attempt, perhaps, was a study of Usman's short stories written in the period from 1949 to 1962, which was done by Neville Potter as a sub-thesis for an Honours degree.⁴¹ However, his study only analyzed 27 of Usman Awang's short stories in attempting to determine his capabilities as a short story writer and to study the development of his technique. Apart from Potter's study, there have been other efforts to include Usman Awang's short stories in scholarly analyses such as "*Cerita Pendek Melayu Selepas Perang Dunia II : Satu Pengkajian Perkembangan Bentuk dan Coraknya*" (Short Stories After Second World War: A Study of Development, Structure and Pattern) done by Omar Mohd. Hashim⁴² and "*Cerpen Melayu Selepas Perang Dunia Kedua: Satu Analisa Tentang Pemikiran dan Struktur*" (Malay Short Stories After the Second World War: An Analysis on Thought and Structure) done by Othman Puteh.⁴³ Omar's study focussed only on the short stories published in *Mastika* and *Berita Harian* from 1945 to 1960, while Othman's study dealt with the short stories written from 1945 to 1969. However, neither of these two studies focuses solely on Usman Awang. Therefore, in order to fill the gap this study I will analyse all the short stories Usman Awang wrote from 1949 until 1980.

In his study of intellectual trends in modern Malay literature, Muhd. Yusof Ibrahim included several of Usman's short stories noting that "since the 1940's short stories have been the most popular and well-received form of creative writings, and some were considered as the finest terms of Malay literary value" (cit).⁴⁴ Further, many of Usman Awang's work show his talents as an intellectual,⁴⁵ because through his short stories, he "explains the problems of society and attempts to find solutions" as well as to "produce ideas and spread them to other members of society". This description fits the definition of an intellectual developed by Syed Hussein Alatas.⁴⁶ In other words, Usman led his readers to consider solutions to prevailing social, economic and political problems. To some extent, short stories written by Usman were also "a device by which the Malay intellectuals imparted their ideas and ideals for public consideration. The short story was also a device to teach, to inform and to caution the people of the various facts and fictions of life as a whole, for it purported to tell nothing but the truth".⁴⁷ Therefore by analysing Usman's ideas through his short stories, we gain an insight into his thinking, and his views about Malay society which is important in understanding Usman's vision for Malay society.

While the link has been made between literature and society in general, and between modern Malay literature and Malay society, this thesis is the first extended study of the link between Usman Awang's short stories and his views on Malay society.

Structure of Thesis

In the study of the key concepts in Usman Awang's short stories, this thesis comprises six chapters. The first chapter provides the social context by presenting a summary of the writer's background and early development as a writer when he began to be interested in writing short stories. To understand more about the writer's ideology, a discussion about his involvement in the literary movement ASAS 50 and his work as a journalist in *Melayu Raya* and *Utusan Melayu* are given in this chapter. This is important because his family, friends and political leaders, as well as political and social changes, influenced the writer, which in turn, influenced his writings. There seems to be a strongly autobiographical element in his work with similarities between some episodes in the stories and Usman's own experiences.

Each subsequent chapter is concerned with an individual concept: '*bangsa*' (race, nation), poverty, justice, leadership and death respectively. The second chapter begins with '*bangsa*', because initially, Usman is more concerned with the backwardness of his own race, as this relates to poverty and the difficult lives of the Malay poor. These problems exist because of the injustices in society, especially the gulf between the poor

and the rich, and the irresponsible attitudes of some Malay leaders, their dishonesty and untrustworthiness. The end of life is death, which becomes the focus of the last chapter of my thesis.

Each chapter begins with a discussion of the origin of the Malay keyword, followed by its range of lexical meanings. This is followed by a brief account of Usman's personal experiences related to each concept. Then, the main section of each chapter analyses Usman's short stories in which the relevant concepts are depicted. From the discussion and analyses of his short stories, Usman's conceptual world is uncovered.

Endnotes

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- ¹ Diana Laurenson and Alan Swingewood, *The Sociology of Literature*, London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1971, p. 13.
 - ² Keris Mas, "*Bahasa Melayu dalam Lapangan Kesusasteraan (Bahagian Prosa)*", *Memoranda Angkatan Sasterawan '50, Kumpulan Tulisan : Bahasa dan Sastera*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1962, pp. 186-205. Quoted from Virginia Matheson Hooker, *Writing a New Society: Social Change Through the Novel in Malay*, St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, in press, p. 11.
 - ³ Virginia Matheson Hooker, "Developing a Rhetoric for Malay Society: The Writings of the Generation of the 1950s (ASAS 50)", *Malay Literature*, Volume 8 Number 2, 1995, p. 18.
 - ⁴ Virginia Matheson Hooker (in press), *op. cit.*, p. 11.
 - ⁵ Usman Awang, "*Seni Rakyat dan Angkatan 50*" in Dinsman and Sutung Umar Rs (eds), *Sikap dan Pemikiran Usman Awang*, Petaling Jaya: Penerbit Fajar Bakti, 1983, p. 42.
 - ⁶ For further details of the impact of printing on Malay literary conventions see Ian Proudfoot, *The Print Threshold in Malaysia*, Clayton, Victoria: Centre of Southeast Asia Studies, Monash University, 1994.
 - ⁷ Hashim Awang, *Cerpen-cerpen Melayu Sebelum Perang Dunia Kedua: Satu Analisa Tentang Tema dan Struktur*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1975, pp. 1 - 2.
 - ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 189.
 - ⁹ Zaba, "Modern Developments" in R. O. Winstedt, "A History of Malay Literature", *Malayan Branch Royal Asiatic Society*, Volume XVII, Part III, January 1940, p. 151.
 - ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 147.
 - ¹¹ *Majalah Guru*, January 1926, p. 4. Quoted from Johan Jaaffar et. al, *History of Modern Malay Literature Vol. I*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1992, pp. 86 - 87.
 - ¹² Hashim Awang, *op. cit.*, p. 4. See also A. Wahab Ali, *The Emergence of the Novel in Modern Indonesian and Malaysian Literature: A Comparative Study*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1991, p. 62.
 - ¹³ Mohd. Taib Osman, "Trends in Modern Malay Literature" in Wang Gungwu (ed.), *Malaysia: A Survey*, Singapore: Donald Moore Books Ltd., 1964, pp. 218 - 219.
 - ¹⁴ For more detail see Virginia Matheson Hooker (in press), *op. cit.*, p. ii. She mentions that she uses the term 'ethno-nationalism' rather than 'nationalism' because the texts of the pre-Independence period do not identify the State as a concept or object of loyalty. Instead it is the concern for the Malay race which is "overwhelming and all-consuming".
 - ¹⁵ Johan Jaaffar et. al., *op. cit.*, p. 97.
 - ¹⁶ For more detail see Arena Wati, *Cerpen Zaman Jepun: Suatu Kajian*, Kuala Lumpur: Penerbitan Pustaka Antara, 1980.
 - ¹⁷ Muhd. Yusof Hasan, *Novels of the Troubled Years*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1989, p. xiv.
 - ¹⁸ Ahmad Kamal Abdullah et. al, *History of Modern Malay Literature Vol. II*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1992, p. 144.

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- 19 Muhd. Yusof Ibrahim, "Some Aspects of the Intellectual Trends in Malay Literature from 1945-1960, with Particular Emphasis on *Cerpen* and *Sajak*", *Akademika*, Number 8, January 1976, pp. 45 - 46.
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- 21 Ahmad Kamal Abdullah et. al., *op. cit.*, p. 151.
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- 26 Published by Fontana Press, London, 1988.
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- 29 Michael van Langenberg, "Analysing Indonesia's New Order State: A Keywords Approach", *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*, Volume 20 Number 2, Summer 1986, pp. 1 - 47
- 30 Usman Awang, "*Sastera dan Masyarakat*" in Dinsman and Sutung Umar Rs. (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 80.
- 31 Raymond Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
- 32 Roger Fowler, *Literature as Social Discourse: The Practice of Linguistic Criticism*, London: Batsford Academic and Educational Ltd., 1981, p. 7.
- 33 *Ibid.* p. 94.
- 34 See, for example, their works: Ungku Maimunah Mohd. Tahir, *Modern Malay Literary Culture: A Historical Perspective*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1987; Ismail Hussein, *Sastera dan Masyarakat*, Kuala Lumpur: Penerbitan Pustaka Zakry Abadi, 1974 and Mohd. Taib Osman, "Modern Malay Literature: A Reflection of Changing Society and Culture", *Aspac Quarterly of Cultural and Social Affairs*, Volume V Number 3 (Winter), 1973, pp. 23 - 27.
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- 38 Virginia Matheson Hooker (1995), *op. cit.*, p. 15.
- 39 *Ibid.*, p. 17.
- 40 Published by the University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1987.
- 41 Neville Potter, "The Short Stories of Usman Awang", unpublished B.A. (Hons.) thesis, Department of Indonesian and Malayan Studies, University of Sydney, 1967.
- 42 Unpublished B.A. (Hons.) thesis, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 1961.
- 43 Published by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kuala Lumpur, 1983.
- 44 Muhd Yusof Ibrahim, *op. cit.*, pp. 47 - 48.
- 45 *Ibid.*, pp. 45 - 64 particularly on pages 54 - 56 where he discusses Usman's work.
- 46 Syed Hussein Alatas, *Intellectuals in Developing Societies*, London: Frank Cass, 1977, p. 9.
- 47 Muhd. Yusof Ibrahim, *op. cit.*, pp. 63 - 64.

CHAPTER ONE

USMAN AWANG : THE WRITER AND HIS ENVIRONMENT

In this chapter, I will deal with Usman's background and his concerns as a writer. It is his family, his friendship with certain individuals, his jobs and his involvement in various literary associations that had greatly influenced his perception, ideology and thoughts about his race, society and country. Much of this is reflected in his short stories.

This discussion is based on two interviews held with Usman at his house No. 4 Jalan 1/33, Kampung Tunku, Petaling Jaya on 31 March 1997 and 5 May 1997, and with A. Samad Ismail (Usman's close friend) at his house No. 2 Section 16, Petaling Jaya on 29 March 1997. It is also based on various articles published in newspapers, magazines, books and theses. The Panel Report on the 1983 National Literary Award (*Anugerah Sastera Negara*) bestowed on Usman also contains important information on Usman and his contribution to the development of modern Malay literature.

Usman's Background

In the 1920s, Malaya was still under British colonial rule. The British brought in many immigrants mainly from China and India to Malaya to work in tin mines and rubber plantations, the two most important and richest industries in the Malayan economy. The majority of Malays on the other hand, remained in their villages and were engaged in peasant farming. As the colonial economy developed, it soon became apparent to more discerning Malays that the policy of isolating Malays from the new type of economy left them far behind in the race towards progress. A sense of threat developed as Malays, who saw themselves as the indigenous people of the country, observed that the immigrants, especially the Chinese, were much better off economically. It was in this climate of unease that ethno-nationalist feelings began to surface among the Malays in the 1930s.

Usman Awang was born just before this period of Malay nationalist ferment. On 12 July 1929, Wan Osman bin Wan Awang Kechik, later better known as Usman Awang, was born in Kampung Tanjung Lembu, Kuala Sedili, Kota Tinggi in the Malay State of Johor. Usman was born into a poor family. His father, Wan Awang Kechik bin Wan Din, who originated from the eastern Malay state of Trengganu had moved to Johor in search of work and had married a Johor girl, Halimah binti Abdul Rahman. Usman

was the second of three boys born to the couple. His elder brother is Wan Ahmad and his younger brother is Wan Ismail.

Usman's father was a fisherman who struggled to support his family especially during the monsoon season. It lasted for 3 - 4 months a year and in this time, he and other fishermen could not go out to sea because of rough weather. When life became more difficult and Wan Awang Kechik found himself unable to support his family on his meagre income, they were forced to move to Mersing to live with Usman's maternal relatives.

When Usman was five years old, his mother died. This had a lasting effect on him for he felt deeply, the loss of a mother's love. To express his love for his mother, Usman later wrote a poem entitled "*Ke Makam Bonda*" (To Mother's Grave).¹ This poem, in which Usman portrays his visit to his mother's grave, expresses his deep and abiding love for his mother. After his mother's death, Usman's life became more difficult as no one took proper care of his food and clothing. Imprinted in his memory was the time when his father did not return home for several days in search of food, leaving Usman and his brothers to fend for themselves. He remembers that on that occasion they were forced to catch king-crabs which they roasted and ate.² The difficult life that Usman experienced influenced his conception of poverty which he later drew on this experience of hardship as he wrote his short stories.

Usman first attended a Malay language school at Kuala Sedili in 1936, moving on to Mersing in 1937 and finally completing his education in Bandar Maharani, Muar in 1942. When he completed the sixth grade, the highest grade offered in a Malay school at that time, Usman was selected to become a trainee teacher. His ambition was to become a school teacher. Unfortunately, the Japanese invasion of Malaya in 1942 disrupted his studies and Usman spent the first two years of the war as a peasant farmer before he and his brother, Ahmad, were arrested by the Japanese and sent to Singapore to become forced labourers. In Singapore, Usman experienced the hardship and cruelties of war. After eight months, he and his brother managed to escape from the Japanese and took refuge in the house of an Indian man, Rajarathnam, for about three months.³ This experience has had a strong impact on him, for his host's wife taught him an important philosophy which he held throughout his life. He still remembers her saying: "Usman, do not be shy when staying in my house. Regard this as your own home. We are all the same. There is no difference between a Malay and an Indian. We have the same blood colour. What separates mankind is wealth and poverty, evil and goodness".⁴ This was to influence deeply Usman's perception of other races and his view on social hierarchy.

Usman and his brother left Singapore in 1944 and returned to live in Segamat, Johor where he began work as an office boy at the Drainage and Irrigation Department. However, after six months, Usman left his first salaried job to join the Japanese Police Force (Botai) only to find himself jobless after only a few weeks due to the Japanese surrender and withdrawal in 1945. When the British returned to Malaya, Usman joined the police force and received his training at the Johor Bahru Police Training Centre in 1946. In 1947, he graduated as a policeman and was sent to work in Melaka.

It was during this period in Melaka that Usman became interested in the Malay nationalist movement and its leaders. His first contact with Malay nationalism was in 1947 when PKMM (*Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya* or Malaya Malay Nationalist Party) organized a congress in Melaka in which he was a policeman on duty. Apart from that Usman had also had to guard nationalist political prisoners such as Wahi Anwar and Bung Karim, Chief of the Melaka branch of API (*Angkatan Pemuda Insaf* or Generation of Aware Youth). Usman in fact was so impressed with Wahi Anwar that he asked for his autograph.⁵ The PKMM's ideology that 'Malay Land Belongs to the Malay Race' (*Tanah Melayu bagi Bangsa Melayu*) and the political climate at that time such as the opposition of the Malays to the idea of the Malayan Union proposed by the British in 1946, helped to mould Usman's conception of '*bangsa*' (race or nation). The Malayan Union was presented as a necessary step toward the granting of independence to Malaya in which each group would have equal rights. The Malays were strongly opposed to the idea of the Malayan Union because it threatened Malay sovereignty in their homeland. As outlined in the Malayan Union plan, the Malay Sultans were to retain their positions but sovereignty was to be transferred to the British Crown. Furthermore, Malayan citizenship was to be given to the immigrants. Although the British abandoned the plan for the Malayan Union, introducing instead the Federation of Malaya, which guaranteed the sovereignty of the Sultans and made it more difficult for immigrants to gain citizenship, Malay nationalism had been much aroused.

In 1948, the Emergency of Malaya was proclaimed and Usman and his friends were sent regularly into the jungle as part of the Jungle Squads engaged in patrolling and searching for communist guerrillas, arresting suspected Communist terrorists, and protecting British plantations. He wrote about this phase of his life in his only novel *Tulang-tulang Berserakan* (Scattered Bones).⁶ It was as a member of the Jungle Squad that the value of human life appeared to have been implanted deep in his heart for he saw several 'enemies' shot dead and some friends killed leaving behind grieving wives, children and relatives. All these experiences touched his heart deeply⁷ and also influenced his conception of death.

Usman's work as a policeman not only brought him in contact with Malay nationalists and exposed him to brutality and death but also sharpened his observations of human behaviour and social issues in general. He remembers one particular incident which happened when he was a policeman. A new young Inspector who was with his girlfriend, walked in front of him and Usman had to give a salute. Usman was convinced that the Inspector deliberately walked in front of him so that as a lower ranking officer, Usman had to salute. He felt very humiliated.⁸ Experiences such as this helped shape Usman's conception of leadership.

In 1951, Usman left the Police Force because he realized that the job was not suitable for him and was not in the best interests of his country because he was fighting to protect British interests in Malaya.⁹ When he left the Police Force he seemed to have found his freedom, a feeling which he never felt before.¹⁰ In October 1951, together with Jamil Sulong, who later became an actor and a much respected film director, Usman went to Singapore where the harsh Emergency Regulations were not in force. There he worked for *Melayu Raya*, a Malay newspaper, as a proof-reader and later as a journalist. He then was promoted to editor in charge of *Mingguan Melayu*, a weekly newspaper of the *Melayu Raya* group.

At the end of 1952, Usman left *Melayu Raya* to work with *Utusan Melayu*, the influential Malay newspaper, where he was placed in charge of the *Utusan Kanak-kanak* (children's section). Later he was promoted to editor of the weekly newspaper *Utusan Zaman* and the literary magazine *Mastika*. During that time, the employees of *Utusan Melayu* were not more than 100. They worked as a team and with high motivation to make *Utusan Melayu* a prestigious newspaper. The journalists were given freedom to criticize the colonial government because *Utusan Melayu* was not under any political sanction.

Among the journalists who worked with Usman were Asraf, Keris Mas and A. Samad Ismail who along with Usman Awang later made their mark as writers. But, journalism and literature were not their only passions for they were also interested in politics. Usman mentions that during that period *Utusan Melayu* was the place for the politicians and literary writers to gather and that this situation created a strong relationship between literature and politics.¹¹

In 1959, after Malaya gained its independence, *Utusan Melayu* was moved to Kuala Lumpur. Usman followed the newspaper to its new location. In 1961 he was involved in a strike by *Utusan Melayu* workers. Most later commentators considered the strike by *Utusan Melayu* employees to be a protest against the new company policy which prohibited journalists from criticizing the Malayan government. The workers were

concerned to protect their freedom of speech.¹² However, according to Osman Abadi, Deputy Chief Editor of *Utusan Melayu*, the strike happened after *Utusan Melayu* experienced financial problems because of poor newspaper circulation and lack of advertising sponsorship.

There were strong suspicions that some of the journalists of *Utusan Melayu* had been influenced by the socialist ideology when they began to publish news that was anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist and anti-establishment. It seems that the strike was a conflict between journalists who were influenced by the socialist ideology and the directors who were strong government supporters.¹³ Ibrahim Fikri as Chief Editor and member of the Board of Directors of *Utusan Melayu* had decided that to make *Utusan Melayu* profitable, it had to support the government. Furthermore, he listed four principles which must be followed by the Editorial Department of *Utusan Melayu*. These were: first, to give full support to the government; second, to give good news coverage although news on opposition parties was to be limited; third, to report ministers' speeches; and fourth, to support the Alliance party as well as giving constructive criticisms. These principles went against those of the journalists because some of them were anti-establishment, besides which they believed that they should be given freedom in writing the news.

During this period *Utusan Melayu* gained the reputation of being a socialist tool. It was said that it was no longer the 'Mouthpiece of the Malays' (*Lidah Melayu*) but had become the 'Mouthpiece of the Socialist Front' (*Lidah Barisan Sosialis*). This was because the global political trend since the 1940s up until the 1960s was influenced by the socialist ideology. *Utusan Melayu* at that period was influenced by the trend whereby the newspaper published news on the development of socialist countries or praised fighters for socialism. For instance, the killing of Patrice Lumumba, a socialist leader in the Congo was highlighted and he was regarded as a hero by *Utusan Melayu*. Usman was clearly influenced by the socialist ideology and he openly declared his support for the concept of socialism.¹⁴

As a result of the strike, Usman was unemployed for several months. This inspired him to write his spiritual poem "*Duri dan Api*" (Thorn and Fire) and a short story "*Sebuah Khemah Didirikan*" (A Tent is Put Up). Apart from the influence of the political environment which inspired him to write at this period, Usman had to be very productive for practical reasons, for he had a family to feed. In 1956 he had married Hasnah Din with whom he had three children, Haslina, who was born in 1957, Iskandar in 1959 and Mohd. Yamin in 1960.

During this period Usman also became more active in literary associations. Together with Malay writers such as A. Samad Ismail, Said Zahari, Keris Mas, Asraf,

Ali Haji Ahmad and Syed Husin Ali, he formed PENA (*Persatuan Penulis Nasional* or National Union of Writers) on 12 February 1961. His fortunes also improved for in the same year he was appointed as editor with the publishing firm Federal Publications in Kuala Lumpur. The following year he started work with the government language and literature agency *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka*. His first job there was as editor of the literary magazine *Dewan Bahasa* after which he became editor of *Dewan Masyarakat*, *Dewan Sastera* and *Dewan Budaya*. For a long time Usman held the position of Senior Research Officer in the Department of Literature in *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka*. In May 1982 he was promoted to head this department, a position he held until he retired in July 1985.¹⁵

Usman Awang as a Writer

Usman's interest in literature began when he was a policeman in Melaka. His friendship with Malay teachers who were writers and interested in politics inspired him to write. One of the teachers was Mohamad Alimin who had a good collection of Indonesian books. His house became a library for Usman. Every time he went to Mohamad Alimin's house, he borrowed at least 10 story books.¹⁶ This inspired him to write his first poem entitled "*Korban Tanahair*" (A Sacrifice for the Homeland) published in *Utusan Zaman* on 7 November 1948. The first piece of creative writing Usman produced was a political poem concerned with Malaya being colonized. As Usman continued writing his name as a poet began to be well known. Most of Usman's poems were published in *Utusan Zaman* and *Mastika*. Some of his better known poems are "*Bunga Popi*" (Poppy Flower), "*Gadis di Kuburan*" (A Girl at the Grave), "*Pak Utih*" (Father Utih), "*Ke Makam Bonda*" (To Mother's Grave), "*Nasib Buruh*" (Fate of the Labourer) and "*Salam Benua*" (Greetings to the Continent). Later, as a leading poet in the country, his poems were collected and published in several collections. The first of these collections entitled *Gelombang* (The Wave) was published in 1963. This was followed by *Duri dan Api* (The Thorn and Fire) in 1966, *Salam Benua* (Greetings to the Continent) in 1982 and *Puisi-puisi Pilihan Sasterawan Negara Usman Awang* (Selected Poems of National Writer, Usman Awang) in 1987. The anthology *Duri dan Api* was selected as a school text for secondary schools in Malaysia in the 1970s.

Most of Usman's poems are concerned with social issues such as poverty ("*Pak Utih*" and "*Nasib Buruh*"); social injustice ("*Gadis di Kuburan*" and "*Duri dan Api*") or anti-war sentiments such as "*Bunga Popi*", "*Salam Benua*" and "*Damai*" and criticism of irresponsible leaders such as "*Surat dari Masyarakat Burung kepada Datuk Bandar*" (Letter from the Bird Community to the Lord Mayor) and "*Suasana*" (Atmosphere).

About the same time that Usman became a poet, he began writing short stories. His first short story is "*Surat Norliah yang Akhir*" (Norliah's Last Letter) published in *Utusan Zaman* on 10 April 1949. Most of his short stories were written in the 1950s and 1960s during his involvement with the ASAS 50 literary movement with its slogan of 'Art for Society'. Through his short stories, he depicted his past experiences, his friendships, and his views and thoughts about the cruel, bad and 'crippled' life especially of Malay society.¹⁷

Before he established his name as a writer, most of Usman's short stories were published in *Utusan Zaman* because when he was with *Utusan Melayu* he was the editor of *Utusan Zaman*. It seems his role as an editor played an important part in enabling his works to be published. At that time no royalty was given to short stories published in newspapers as a result of which few writers were prepared to send in their short stories to be published. Thus, Usman's short stories filled this void. He published his short stories under several pen-names to avoid being accused of monopolising the literary columns. Once Usman became well known, his short stories were published in newspapers and magazines of higher standing such as *Berita Harian*, *Dewan Sastera*, *Dewan Bahasa*, *Dewan Masyarakat* and *Mastika*. His short story "*Kami yang Terlibat*" (We Who Are Involved) won third prize in a short story writing competition organized by *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* in 1957.

Thus, Usman established himself not only as a leading poet in the country but also as a respected short story writer. His short story "*Matinya Seorang Perempuan*" (The Death of a Woman) published in 1959 was later considered by Dinsman, a literary critic, as one of Usman's best short stories. In Dinsman's opinion this short story showed Usman's capability as a short story writer, not only in the aspect of technique but also in his portrayal of characters and his command of the language.¹⁸ Kassim Ahmad, a literary critic, considered Usman's short stories in the anthologies *Mekar dan Segar* (Blossom and Refreshing) and *Dua Zaman* (Two Eras) as of a high standard.¹⁹ In 1983, the panel of judges of the National Literary Award chose Usman's short story "*Sebuah Khemah Didirikan*" (A Tent is Put Up) published in 1962 as "the highest achievement of Usman in short story writing". According to the panel "the writer with intelligence managed to describe the strike scenes besides elaborating on the subconscious of one of the workers involved in the strike".²⁰

Some of Usman's short stories were compiled in the anthology *Degup Jantung* (Heartbeat) published by Pustaka Melayu Baru, Kuala Lumpur in 1963. Several others were compiled in anthologies such as *Cerita-cerita Pendek DBP* (Short Stories of DBP) published by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kuala Lumpur, 1958; *Mekar dan Segar* published by Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1962; *Dua Zaman* published by

Pustaka Antara, Kuala Lumpur, 1963; *Serunai Malam* (Night Serenade) published by Pustaka Antara, Kuala Lumpur, 1966; *Pertentangan* (Resistance) published by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kuala Lumpur, 1971 and *Koleksi Terpilih Sasterawan Negara Usman Awang* (Selected Collections of National Literary of Usman Awang) published by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kuala Lumpur, 1995.

Usman's only novel *Tulang-tulang Berserakan* (Scattered Bones) published in 1966 was based on his experiences as a policeman in Melaka. This novel has strong autobiographical elements. It begins with Leman (almost identical with Usman's own character) and 39 other policemen at a Melaka Police Station. The story describes Leman and his friends going about their duty in Melaka town including taking charge of guarding a congress organized by PKMM. It also tells about their involvement in ambushing communists in the jungle. The story ends with Leman deciding to resign from the police force. The scenes depicted in this novel give the reader an impression of the hard life of policemen and their families. This novel was selected by the Ministry of Education, Malaysia as a literary text for secondary schools in Malaysia in 1970s.

Apart from being a poet, short story writer and novelist, Usman is also well known as a dramatist. He began writing plays in the early 1960s. Several of his plays were popular and were published in collections such as *Dari Bintang ke Bintang* (From Star to Star, 1965), *Serunai Malam* (Night Serenade, 1966), *Di Bawah Matahari* (Under the Sun, 1969), *Tirai Zaman* (Epoch's Curtain, 1969), *Muzika Uda dan Dara* (Music of Uda and Dara, 1976), *Tamu di Bukit Kenny* (Visitors at Kenny Hill, 1984), *Drama-Drama Pilihan Usman Awang* (Selected Plays of Usman Awang, 1988) and *Matinya Seorang Pahlawan Jebat* (Death of a Warrior Jebat, 1992). *Muzika Uda dan Dara* is in fact an adaptation of Usman's short story entitled "*Uda dan Dara*" (Uda and Dara, 1956). In December 1972, this drama was performed to appreciative audiences at the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur.

Throughout his writing career Usman widely known by his pen-name Tongkat Warrant (Baton), a name inspired by his career as a policeman. While this remains his most popular pen-name, Usman, at various times in his long and successful career as a writer, has used other pen-names such as Adi Jaya, Amir, Atma Jiwa, Manis, Pengarang Muda, Rose Murni, Setiabudi, U.A. and Zaini.

Usman is not just an artist who produces poems, short stories, dramas and novel. From time to time, he has played the role of literary critic. He has written articles about Malay literature and its development as a modern literature. Some of his articles were compiled in *Tema dan Tugas Sastera Melayu Modern* (Theme and the Role of Modern Malay Literature) published by Federal Publication, Kuala Lumpur in 1963; *Sikap dan*

Pemikiran Usman Awang (Attitude and the Thinking of Usman Awang) published by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kuala Lumpur in 1983 and *Koleksi Terpilih Sasterawan Negara Usman Awang*.

Usman Awang is one of a few Malay writers to have attracted international interest. It is a testimony of the high quality of his writings that several of his works have been translated into other languages such as English, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, French, Thai, Czech, Danish, Italian, Russian and Tamil. It is a tribute to him that his works have attracted interest outside Malaysia.

Usman believes that his commitment to society should not be limited to writing poems, short stories, a novel, plays or articles, but should extend to activities in literary and social associations. By doing so, he believes that he could benefit society and the country. He has worked tirelessly for the recognition of Malay literature as an important part of Malay society or Malayan life and has been vocal in expressing what he wants for his society. Thus Usman ensured that he was also active in several literary associations right from the start. This began in 1950 when he was involved in the formation of IPM (*Ikatan Persuratan Melayu Melaka* or Melaka Malay Literary Society) and was appointed as its secretary for the years 1950 and 1951. He was also active in ASAS 50 and was appointed as secretary for two years (1956 and 1957). Usman was involved in the formation of KUBU (*Kumpulan Budi Utama* or Budi Utama Group) in 1959 and was appointed as a committee member in the same year. In 1962, Usman participated in the formation of PENA (*Penulis Nasional* or National Writer) and was appointed as First President for the years 1962 and 1963. In 1991, Usman was involved in the formation of *Persatuan Persahabatan China-Malaysia* (China-Malaysia Friendship Association) and since 1991, until now Usman has been the association's President. The idea to form this association came after Usman was invited to visit China by the Chinese government in 1986.²¹

For his contribution to the development of Malay literature, society and nation, Usman along with five other writers²² was awarded the title *Pejuang Sastera* (fighter for literature) by the Malaysia Federal Government on 29 May 1976. On 29 September 1982, he was awarded the SEA (Southeast Asia) Writer Award by the government of Thailand. On 11 August 1983, he was awarded the *Ijazah Doktor Kehormat (Persuratan)* (Honorary Doctorate of Literature) by the University of Malaya. In the same year, Usman received the prestigious *Anugerah Sastera Negara* (National Literature Award) from the Government of Malaysia. In 1985, he received the *Zamalah Sastera* (Literature Grant) from *Berita Harian*. Usman's literary achievements also brought him government recognition and titles. In 1991, the Sultan of Perak bestowed on him *Datuk Mahkota Perak* with the title *Datuk* and in 1995, he was made a *Johan Mangku Negara* (J.M.N)

by the *Yang di Pertuan Agong* of Malaysia. In 1995, he was awarded the *Anugerah Penyair Johor* (Johor Poet Award). These honours conferred on him show that Usman's contribution to the development of Malay literature, society and country was highly respected and appreciated.

Usman Awang and ASAS 50

Usman and ASAS 50 are virtually synonymous. He was associated with the organization due to his own active involvement in, and contribution to, the development of Malay literature. Furthermore, it was a two-way process, so that ASAS 50 in turn influenced his own thinking and principles. It is therefore, useful to detail the background to the formation of ASAS 50 and its ideology.

Following the imposition of the Emergency, a state of alert and the imposition of a concerted effort by the British colonial government to fight a communist uprising in Malaya, many leaders and supporters of banned anti-British nationalist political organizations such as PKMM, API, AWAS (*Angkatan Wanita Sedar* or Organization of Aware Women) fled to Singapore. As a colony outside the Federation of Malaya, Singapore was not stringently affected by the Emergency law and was thus, considered relatively safe. Aside from providing a haven for nationalists under threat, Singapore was also important as a thriving city with ample employment opportunities.

After the Second World War, there was a steady stream of migration to Singapore of youths from rural areas in search of jobs. One of them was Usman Awang. Singapore was also important as a centre for printing and publishing. The rapid growth of its publishing houses such as the *Syarikat Melayu Raya Press* which was set up by PKMM's leaders who published *Melayu Raya*; Pustaka H.M. Ali, Qalam and Harny and the proliferation of magazines such as *Mastika*, *Hiburan* and *Mutiara* and especially the newspaper, *Utusan Melayu*, enabled it to emerge as an important centre for sponsoring and distributing literature.²³

Shortly after moving to Singapore in October 1951, Usman Awang associated himself with a group of young Malay writers known as *Angkatan Sasterawan Limapuluhan* or ASAS 50 (Generation of Writers of the Fifties). He became a member of ASAS 50 in 1952. The idea to form this body came originally from a group of teachers, who had "an increasing desire to work together to develop the Malay language and modernize Malay literature". One of the teachers "Cikgu Mohd. Ariff Ahmad (pen-name Mas) acted on this, and began to contact members of *Sahabat Pena*, a pen-friend club

formed in 1949, whose members' addresses were available, inviting them to form a new literary organization".²⁴

Mohd. Ariff had in fact conceived the idea of forming ASAS 50 while he was still a trainee teacher at Sultan Idris Training College (SITC), Tanjung Malim between 1946 and 1949. SITC was then the only training college for Malays with a Malay education who aspired to become teachers in Malay schools in the country. Thus, it allowed the gathering of bright and talented young Malays and fostered a climate of intellectual ferment that found expression in nationalist aspirations. Mohd. Ariff represents a good example of a product of this famous breeding ground for Malay nationalism who went on to fulfill aspirations acquired at the institution. His desire was to unite writers from the Malay Peninsula, Singapore, Labuan and Brunei, separate territories which he referred to, collectively, as '*tanah air*' (the homeland).

Upon completion of his studies at the college, Mohd. Ariff returned to Singapore to work as a school teacher and took an active role in *Kesatuan Guru-guru Melayu Singapura* (Singapore Malay Teachers Union) apart from writing short stories and poetry. *Kesatuan Guru-guru Melayu Singapura* was one of the most active associations in Malaya and Singapore at that period and became a trade union movement later.²⁵ This involvement in the *Kesatuan Guru-guru Melayu Singapura* and his position as a writer, facilitated Mohd. Ariff's pursuit of his college dream of uniting writers throughout the country in an organization.²⁶ The opportunity came in April 1950 when a group of Malay reporters and writers were invited by the Indonesian consul in Singapore to meet a visiting Indonesian professor, Sutan Muhammad Zain. At that meeting, Hamzah, one of the young Malays present, introduced his friends Masuri S.N., Asraf, Jymy Asmara and Rosmera as '*penulis-penulis dari angkatan 50*' (writers of the generation of the 50s). Inspired, Mohd. Ariff worked to fulfill his dream. Finally, on 6 August 1950, about twenty young writers met and officially launched the '*Angkatan Sasterawan 50*'.²⁷

The spirit of Malay nationalism which influenced Mohd. Ariff Ahmad while he was a student at SITC was carried by ASAS 50 which later influenced Usman. Usman might have been influenced to join ASAS 50 by Asraf, Masuri S.N., Jymy Asmara and Rosmera. Asraf was Usman's colleague in *Utusan Melayu* while Masuri S.N., Jymy Asmara and Rosmera were among a group of writers that he came to know.

The aims and achievements of ASAS 50 were later described by Keris Mas, its First President, in the following terms:

In their literature, the ASAS 50 members adopted a style which had new life, a style of language that was more fresh than that of the generation of older writers, using themes from society, politics and culture which had the purpose of arousing a spirit of independence, a

spirit of 'standing on your own feet' as one '*bangsa*' who were respected and had their own identity, to defend justice and oppose oppression ... We criticized the defects in society and those groups whom we considered to have been the means of bringing those defects into being. We criticized the actions of colonialism and its tools, that is the upper strata, the strata whose spirit was stultified by the influence of feudalism and superstitious teachings, and old-fashioned teachings connected with religion.²⁸

ASAS 50 chose as its slogan '*Seni untuk Masyarakat*' (Art for Society) and declared that literature must be committed to helping society. In other words, art should be social-realist in orientation: it had to portray the misery and problems of the Malay masses. According to Professor Maier, "some of the ideas of ASAS 50 were very close to those that inspired the Institute for People's Culture, Lekra, which was founded in Jakarta in 1950 by some prominent members of the Communist Party of Indonesia".²⁹ Unfortunately, Professor Maier does not elaborate further on the exact nature of the similarities.

In 1954, the members of ASAS 50 officially stood at 99 of whom a large group were teachers followed by journalists and policemen. However, only 72 were active writers. Of these writers, the journalists were the most prolific.³⁰ Although Usman Awang did not become a member until 1952 he has been regarded as representing much of its aspirations and character. Ismail Hussein, Professor of Malay Literature and President of GAPENA, was to later regard him as a "symbol of the Generation of Writers of the Fifties because Usman Awang as a writer was born into the world of Malay literature together with the birth of ASAS 50".³¹ Between 1952-56, Usman Awang was active in ASAS 50 beginning as a committee member and later as its Secretary. He, as well as Keris Mas and Asraf played crucial roles in ASAS 50, both in their capacity as organizers and leaders of the organization as well as writers in their own right.³²

Most of ASAS 50's writers were young and radical. In politics they were at odds with the Malay moderates whose struggle for independence was characterised by cooperation with the British. They on the other hand, resisted the British, were anti-upper class, and were critical of oppressive orthodox religious groups and groups which allowed themselves to be the tools of the colonial power.³³ Usman strongly supported the aim of ASAS 50 as stated in an oft-quoted remark he made in his article "*Kesusasteraan ialah Ilmu Pengetahuan yang Dipunyai oleh Seluruh Bangsa*" (Literature is Knowledge Owned by the *Bangsa* as a Whole):

The duty of the new generation is to destroy old and outdated thinking, which places faith only solely on fate and God's decree, and belief in superstition which destroy their souls, and fill their thoughts with firm, accurate and strong ideas. That is the only way to give awareness to the people, and direct them towards clear, developed and free thinking.³⁴

Usman Awang, Keris Mas, Asraf and Awam-il-Sarkam were also employed by *Utusan Melayu* where they were able to air their radical views so much so that Professor Syed Husin Ali labelled them as the 'Cecil Street group' based on the name of the street where *Utusan Melayu's* office was located. Both Keris Mas and Asraf had been active members of political parties³⁵ and even though Usman was not a member of any political party, he sympathized with the radical nationalist leaders at that time.³⁶ As journalists with *Utusan Melayu* they were in close contact with Malay nationalist leaders such as A. Samad Ismail, Dahari Ali and Salleh Daud.³⁷ Their anti-colonial views were strongly held and, as Ungku Maimunah, a scholar, puts it in her survey of the group, they perceived freedom from colonial rule as "integral to the literary struggle".³⁸

The ASAS 50 movement can be categorised as pro-nationalist as described by Professor Syed Husin Ali: "The ASAS 50 writers may be broadly classified as nationalist writers who were inspired by the people and who wanted progressive change for their society".³⁹ They were concerned about Malay nationalism, the need to fight Malay passivity, poverty and social injustice. Even though ASAS 50 was primarily a literary body, "its activities covered a much wider field, and it was basically concerned with equipping Malay society to take its place in the post-war world of Malaya".⁴⁰

When ASAS 50 became inactive in the 1960s, Usman together with Keris Mas, Asraf, Syed Husin Ali, Said Zahari, A. Samad Ismail and Ali Haji Ahmad formed PENA on 2 September 1962. As the President, Usman had the responsibility to achieve PENA's aim:

An association which unites Malay intellectuals who, perpetuating the ideals of ASAS 50, is of the opinion that Malay language and literature should play a central role in the formation of the national culture of Malaya.⁴¹

PENA was very effective in its efforts to keep Malay language and Malay literature in the centre of attention of political life. This can be seen particularly on 3 March 1967 when the Malaysian government wanted to pass the Draft law for the National Language. This law had been opposed by the Malays because it ignored the importance of the Malay language as stated in Article 152 of the Malaysia Constitution. Usman and PENA members, together with 120 other associations with more than 2,000 people, were involved in protesting against the draft.⁴²

Even though ASAS 50 was inactive in the 1960s, Usman continued strongly to support ASAS 50's ideology '*Seni untuk Masyarakat*' until the 1980s. He expressed it in most of his short stories. He strongly believed that literature could be an effective tool in the struggle for independence for the country, to fight for social justice, against passivity,

poverty and irresponsible leaders. These were issues that he believed faced Malay society.

The Impact of Socio-economic Changes

Among the Malays, the early seeds of ethno-nationalism were sown by religious modernists who returned after studying Islam in the Middle East. One of the most prominent among them was Syed Sheikh Al-Hadi (1867-1934), a follower of Muhamad Abduh, the well-known Egyptian teacher and modernist at the turn of the century. These pioneers of Islamic modernism were very concerned about the backwardness of the Malays and Muslims generally. They believed that "in order for the Malays to progress, they must throw off the shackles of superstition and unorthodox practices" and use their God-given power of reason to seek interpretations "to certain aspects of Islam so that they could serve as useful guides to enable Malays to meet the challenges of the time".⁴³ With his colleagues, Syed Sheikh Al-Hadi also preached that the Malays should adopt some aspects of Western education and technology. They started a newspaper, *Al-Imam* (1906) and Arabic schools in Penang and Melaka, to propagate their ideas. Syed Sheikh Al-Hadi wrote many articles including "*Menuntut Ketinggian Akan Anak-anak Negeri*" (The Pursuit of Greatness for the People of the Country) published in *Al-Imam* on 2 July 1907 pointing to "the backwardness of the Malays" and "their domination by alien races".⁴⁴

Besides these religious leaders, there was a group of Malay-educated teachers and journalists which arose in the early twentieth century, whose concerns were more secular. Initially, they were motivated by the desire to bring about improvements in the performance of the Malays in education and in their participation in economic development so that the Malays would not be lagging behind other races such as the Indians and the Chinese.⁴⁵ "They were drawn almost wholly from the Malay peasantry and were therefore critical of the establishment, whether the British colonial government, the traditional Malay ruling classes or the English-educated intelligentsia of any ethnic group. These Malay-educated elite founded the KMM (*Kesatuan Melayu Muda* or Young Malay Union) in late 1938".⁴⁶

Before the impact of British colonial policy in Malaya which officially began in 1874 when they signed the Pangkor Treaty with the Sultan of Perak resulting in the appointment of a British Resident in each of the western Malay States, most of the Malays who lived in the rural sector were engaged in semi-subsistence agricultural activities, producing food crops such as rice and vegetables and supplementing their income with fishing. Only a few Malays were engaged in the two main industries of tin-mining and

agricultural plantation. In the early 20th century, with the increase in demand for tin and rubber for export, the British government encouraged unrestricted immigration from India and China to provide much needed workers for the two main industries. This resulted in the influx of a migrant population, particularly between 1910 and 1930. "With the intensification of British capitalist infiltration, tin-mining and the rubber industry became full-scale capitalist enterprises with their commercial centres in the urban areas" mostly worked by the Chinese and Indians. Meanwhile, "the Malays remained in their semi-subsistence economy which was confined mainly to the rural areas".⁴⁷

The Malays began to express concern at their steadily weakening economic and social position in their own country. While they compared themselves unfavourably with the rapid advancement of the migrant Chinese and Indian communities, Malays rarely voiced a violent antagonism towards these groups. By the late 1920s and the 1930s certain political and economic developments were to radicalize Malay attitudes towards other Asian groups, but especially towards the Chinese. The conflict between Malays and the immigrants was sparked off in 1931 when H.M. Veerasamy, a representative for Indian immigrants, stated in one of the State Councils (that is the legislative councils in the various states where members were appointed rather than elected) that "his community should be accorded rights and privileges like those enjoyed by indigenous Malays".⁴⁸ Even more insistent than H.M. Veerasamy was a Chinese member of the Straits Settlements Legislative Council, Lim Cheng Yan who was a prominent Penang Chinese leader, who claimed "We have become inseparable from this country. It's ours, our country".⁴⁹ This caused grave concern among many Malays and prompted vehement reactions in the Malay press, especially in *Majlis*, *Warta Malaya*, *Saudara*, *Suara Benar*, *Utusan Melayu*, *Bumiputra*, *Tanah Melayu*, *Cahaya Singapura*, *Persahabatan* and *Warta Kinta*. These papers were most vigorous in defending Malay rights and rebutting alien immigrant demands,⁵⁰ and tried to promote the consciousness of 'Malayness' among the Malay readers. For instance in *Suara Benar*, on 22 November 1932, an editorial stated that "the Malays have rights not because they were born in Malaya but because they belong to the Malay '*bangsa*' (race) and are the first '*bangsa*' that owns the land".⁵¹ Such developments resulted in many Malays fearing and resenting the immigrant races: the force that moved them to a form of ethno-nationalism that was essentially directed against the 'foreign people' (*orang asing*) or 'newcomers' (*pendatang*).

Consequently, during the 1930s the words '*bangsa*' and '*bangsa Melayu*' occur frequently in the newspapers and journals with the coming of '*orang asing*' in Malaya. With the articulation of the word '*bangsa*' came the need to understand it as a concept. It was a relatively new term for Malays who were scattered on the Peninsula and whose loyalty had been given to their Sultans who were rulers of the nine Malay states. Before a sense of nationalism could emerge, they needed to feel a sense of unity with each other as

'Malays'. The need to express their identity and collectiveness as one '*bangsa*' slowly resulted in Malay awareness which led to the formation of Malay '*kebangsaan*' (nationalism) which began as a movement against 'foreign people'.

During the 1920s, the Chinese in Malaya had become more politicized through the activities of the Chinese Communist Party and the revived Kuomintang. There was an increase in Chinese schools in Malaya using '*kuo yu*' (Mandarin) and teaching subjects more orientated toward China than Malaya. British measures towards decentralization further weakened Malay authority and coincided with attempts by the Chinese to increase their own participation in government. Malay fears of Chinese domination were accentuated by the census of 1931 which revealed that for the first time in British Malaya, there were more Chinese (1,709,392) than Malays (1,644,173). All these factors transformed Malay attitudes towards the Chinese from one of envy, but toleration to distrust.⁵²

During the 1930s, several associations that were exclusively Malay in membership and directed towards the general improvement of the Malays, were established such as PASPAM (*Persaudaraan Sahabat Pena* or The Brotherhood of Pen Pals, Malaya) which was formed on 15 April 1934 and KMM (*Kesatuan Melayu Muda* or Young Malays Association) founded in August 1938 by Ibrahim Yaakub and several others including Ishak Haji Muhammad. One of PASPAM's main activities was "frequent personal correspondence among members in which they exchanged views on the social and political problems of the Malays".⁵³ It thus helped to create and develop political consciousness which eventually contributed to a radical Malay nationalism. Its slogan, 'Long live the language! Long live the Race!' (*Hidup Bahasa! Hidup Bangsa!*) emphasised its ethno-nationalist aims.⁵⁴ In 1938 with a membership of 12,000 a monthly journal named *Pemberita Pejabat Paspam*, popularly known as *PASPAM* was started.

This journal containing news, views and original writings, was circulated to interested readers as well as PASPAM members. It further widened the dissemination of new ideas and thereby, together with the personal correspondence, helped to generate a political consciousness which eventually contributed to radical nationalism within the Malay society.⁵⁵

On the other hand, the principle of the KMM as stated by Ishak Haji Muhammad was to stop the Malays from being "exploited by other races" and to create "nationalist feeling" among the Malays.⁵⁶ Within less than two years from its official formation, the KMM had formed branches in Penang, Melaka and in all the nine Malay states except Perlis. The association was "openly anti-British and radical in outlook, the organization advocated fighting for independence by aligning itself with Indonesia".⁵⁷ As this organization was obviously anti-British, in 1940, about 150 members of KMM were arrested.⁵⁸

The form of nationalism had changed from being directed towards the improvement of the Malay to being anti-British as the conflicts that resulted from colonial rule and the changes wrought by it came to the fore. For instance, the British monopoly of the major economic enterprises led to non-British entrepreneurs being rendered less effective, and this caused a certain amount of frustration. In the Administration, local Malay officers almost always had British superiors above them, and they were often dissatisfied with the inequality of treatment. For many of the businessmen and administrators, British rule was seen as an obstacle to their desire for promotion, although for a few of the Malay elite it had opened up various new opportunities and privileges. While there was impoverishment among some people, those who were in close association with the British political and economic activities were doing well, but the British who owned and controlled the most important sectors of the economy were still viewed as foreigners who drained away the wealth of the country. Furthermore, there were feelings of indignation that the Malay language and Malay education were treated as inferior to that of the British, and that the traditional culture of the people was being denigrated.⁵⁹

When the Japanese occupied Malaya on 15 February 1942, the members of KMM who had been arrested were released. During the Japanese Occupation, members of the secular, Malay-educated intelligentsia, mainly teachers and journalists, sought to use the Japanese to achieve their social and political goals. The Japanese, for their part,

saw some value in encouraging them, if only to ensure their co-operation in Japanese economic and military plans. The radical Malay intelligentsia were chosen to lead youth movements and conduct publicity campaigns to encourage nationalism. Several became leading figures in the paramilitary youth group organized by the Japanese, known as PETA (*Pembela Tanah Air* or Defenders of the Motherland).⁶⁰

In July 1945, the Japanese finally agreed to promote a Malay nationalist movement based on the 'Greater Indonesia' concept. A new political organization, KRIS (*Kesatuan Rakyat Indonesia Semenanjung* or Union of Peninsular Indonesia, but later changed to *Kekuatan Rakyat Indonesia Istimewa* or Supreme Strength of the Indonesian People) was formed under the leadership of Ibrahim Haji Yaakob and Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, to replace KMM, with the aim of achieving independence and effecting a union with Indonesia. However, the surrender of the Japanese on 15 August 1945 brought these plans to a premature end. After the surrender of the Japanese, PETA and KRIS were disbanded by the British. Indonesia proclaimed her independence on 17 August of the same year. The impact of the Indonesian revolution on Malay nationalist aspirations was very great.

After the British regained control of the country on 17 October 1945, the PKMM (*Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya* or Malaya Malay Nationalist Party) was founded and led by Dr. Burhanuddin Al Helmy. In the middle of February 1946, PKMM formed its youth wing API (*Angkatan Pemuda Insaf* or Generation of Aware Youth) led by Ahmad Boestamam and later a women's wing AWAS (*Angkatan Wanita Sedar* or Generation of Aware Women) was formed, led by Shamsiah Fakeh. However, following the stepping up of Chinese-dominated communist activities, and with the murder of several Europeans, the colonial government imposed a state of Emergency throughout Malaya in 1948. This resulted in the banning of political organizations suspected of being 'leftist' or in sympathy with anti-government activities. Among those banned were PKMM and both its subsidiaries, AWAS and API.⁶¹

During the Japanese Occupation, "the anti-Chinese feeling among Malays was further encouraged by the Japanese who used paramilitary units composed mainly of Malays to fight Chinese resistance groups".⁶² As the Chinese resistance groups considered Malays as collaborators with the Japanese, they were often hostile to and suspicious of the Malays. This resulted in increasing the prejudice among Malays towards the Chinese whose loyalty towards Malaya was suspect. The Malays began to voice strongly their slogan '*Negeri Melayu Untuk Orang Melayu*' (Malay States for the Malay People), to emphasize the sovereignty of the Malay rulers, and to demand Malay special privileges and seek protection for Malay customs, Islam as their religion and the Malay language.

Furthermore, Malay fears of Chinese domination were accentuated by the census of 1947 which revealed that the Chinese population in Malaya stood at 2,614,667 or 44.70 percent of the total population which was more than the Malay population which stood at 2,234,185 or 38.20 percent of the total population. Thus, the total immigrant (Chinese, Indian and others) population made up 61.80 percent of the inhabitants.⁶³ Apart from that, economically, the Malays were very backward compared to the immigrant races, especially the Chinese. The Malays who were overwhelmingly a rural community had a very low standard of living. On the other hand, the Chinese were active in commerce and in particular, controlled the small and medium-sized businesses which enabled them to enjoy higher incomes.

Some of the Malays began to be increasingly aware of their poor situation in their own homeland and to blame the British in Malaya for bringing in other races to Malaya and for their policy of preservation of Malay life. The situation in Malay politics began to be tense with the Malayan Union proposal on 1 April 1946 by the British colonial government. The British government adopted a plan to incorporate the Federated Malay States (Selangor, Perak, Pahang and Negeri Sembilan), Unfederated Malay States

(Johor, Kelantan, Trengganu, Kedah and Perlis), Penang and Melaka into a Malayan Union with a central government, a governor, and legislative and executive councils. All citizens of the Malayan Union would have equal rights, including admission to the administrative civil service and Malayan citizenship was to be extended to non-Malays.⁶⁴ The Malays opposed the British idea because they stood to lose their special status as the indigenous community, and non-Malays would acquire the same citizenship rights as Malays.

Racial tensions had in fact already erupted into racial violence immediately after the war and the collapse of the Japanese administration in August 1945. During the first seven months (September 1945 to March 1946), after the return of the British when Malaya and Borneo were under military government - the British Military Administration (BMA), racial killings began between the Malays and the Chinese as a direct consequence of the Japanese Occupation. The Japanese had worked with the Malays, but the Chinese had joined resistance groups and dominated the MPAJA (Malayan's Peoples Anti-Japanese Army). After the Japanese withdrawal the MPAJA members used the chaos of the immediate post-war years to take their revenge on Malay 'collaborators' which led to clashes between them and newly organized Malay village groups.

All these developments were responsible for increasing Malay ethno-nationalist feelings concerning their position as the indigenous people of the country. This heightened awareness had already manifested itself in the formation of PKMM in 1945 by the Malay radical left with its slogan '*Membela Hak dan Keadilan Putera Melayu*' (To Protect the Rights of and [to obtain] Justice for the Malays) which will be discussed further in the next chapter. The unpopular proposal for a Malayan Union in 1946 then led to the formation of the United Malay National Organization (U.M.N.O) with its slogan '*Hidup Melayu*' (Long Live the Malays).

Therefore, the social and political changes in Malaya had aroused the awareness of the Malays towards their own race. This encouraged the spirit of belonging and collectiveness among the Malays which later developed into the spirit of Malay nationalism. As a result, as stressed by A. M. Thani "the years of the fifties represented the climax of the rise of the spirit of collectiveness in Malay society and this actually was the result of the awareness towards their environment". In one respect "we can see the Malay becoming more critical and sometimes even too critical towards the immigrant groups either the colonial or immigrant races".⁶⁵

In the history of Malay nationalism, one event known as the Maria Hertogh riots in Singapore in December 1950 was of particular significance in the 1950s. At a glance, the Maria Hertogh or Nadrah riots appear to be solely religious in motivation. A more

careful study, however, would show that the riots were not without political significance of their own in that they demonstrated the potentially explosive force of religion (Islam) in the Malay political arena. In addition, the role played by *Persatuan Persuratan Pemuda-pemudi Melayu Singapura* abbreviated 4PM Singapura (The Literary Organization of Young Malay Men and Women of Singapore), GPMS (*Gabungan Penuntut-penuntut Melayu Semenanjung* and The Federation of Malays' Student Unions of the Malay Peninsula) and ASAS 50 which were active in staging shows which were consciously geared "to arouse the spirit and consciousness of the Malay nation" all contributed to an already acute sense of Malay nationalism. These organizations were constituted within the period between the beginning of the Emergency and the outbreak of the Nadrah incidents and each was strongly committed to arousing the consciousness of the Malays in order to improve their lot educationally, economically and socially.⁶⁶

In their theatrical activities, members of 4PM fulfilled two needs simultaneously, one implicit, the other explicit. Members fulfilled the psychological need to express their political feelings while presenting a subtle political message, designed to raise the political consciousness of their audiences. This was actualized either in a '*bangsawan*' (contemporary play) or in a musical manner, usually a song by an individual or a choir. In addition to that, it was common practice in those days to open each performing event with a short speech, in most cases filled with political insinuations which showed the backwardness of the Malays in various aspects of life.⁶⁷

All the above developments show the concern of the Malays about their own identity and the awareness of the importance of their collectiveness and Malayness. Another important event occurred in 1952 when the government amended the Citizenship Law (*Undang-undang Kerakyatan*) which was seen as more lenient compared to the Citizenship Law of 1948. In the 1948 Law, an immigrant could gain Malayan citizenship only if he or she was proficient in writing and speaking Malay besides the English language. The law of 1952 required an applicant to be able to speak Malay. Apart from that the 1948 Law stipulated a residential requirement of 15 to 24 years while the 1952 Law only required one to stay 10 to 12 years.⁶⁸ As a result, more than one million Chinese qualified for citizenship. This caused dissatisfaction among the Malays who again raised their concerns in the newspapers.⁶⁹

The Malays realized that their community was far less mobilized socially and politically than the non-Malays. "As further confirmation of the economic backwardness of the Malay masses, newspapers of the day reiterated again and again the fact of Malay poverty".⁷⁰ For instance, the newspaper *Majlis* on 8 February 1952 stated that "the Malays have been looked down upon because of their poverty, they are poor in their own

country".⁷¹ In another issue of *Majlis* on 16 February 1951, Dr. Burhanuddin, leader of PKMM, expressed his dissatisfaction with the Malay economy:

The British came to this country to colonize. They paralyzed the 'bangsa's economy...The British brought in labourers and workers causing our economy to collapse and us to suffer today... The events which happen in front of us are not our fault but are purposely done to oppress us and with the weakness of our economy we cannot develop our spirit and religion.⁷²

This created worry among the Malays including Usman Awang. Most of the writers of ASAS 50 themselves, including Usman Awang were individuals who came from poor village families and had experienced a difficult life. Usman was much troubled by the plight of his own 'bangsa'. As he stressed in his article "*Seni Sastera Melayu dan Pendukungnya*" (The Art of Malay Literature and Its Supporter) published in 1952: "For the Malay 'bangsa' to either live or die, develop or remain backward it requires the full strength and bravery of the younger generation to become giant energisers for arousing the 'bangsa'".⁷³

One of the ways forward was considered to be through education and in this ASAS 50 played a significant role. ASAS 50 and its committee members formed the Malay Education Council (*Majlis Pelajaran Melayu*) where more than 50 Malay and Islamic associations in Singapore united to fight for Malay education in Singapore. At the end of 1953, the Malay Education Council sent a memorandum to the Singapore Constitutional Commission (*Suruhanjaya Perlembagaan Singapura*) known as the Rendel Commission, demanding that Malay be made the main medium of instruction from the primary school level to the university. Although this action was unsuccessful, ASAS 50 and its association continued to campaign on this issue.⁷⁴

At the Second Malay Language and Literature Congress held in Seremban from 28 December 1953 until 2 January 1954, stronger voices spoke on the issue of the Malay language as the national language.⁷⁵ This issue continued to be highlighted at the Third Malay Language and Literature Congress held in Johor Bahru and Singapore from 16 until 21 September 1956.⁷⁶ One of the biggest achievements of ASAS 50 was in persuading the government to establish the *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* (National Language and Literature Agency) in 1957 which played and continues to play a major role in developing Malay literature through publishing literary books, journals and magazines. It also became a reference institution in regard to the Malay language.

Meanwhile, on the forefront of political activities stood UMNO (United Malays National Organization). Due to its stature as the party that had the full approval of the British it became the most important organ through which the Malays channelled their

grievances. Although UMNO was established in 1946 "to fight exclusively for Malay interests" and was "formally committed to bringing Malays into the modern sector of the economy" its leaders were mainly members of the English-educated administrative elite, essentially conservative and pro-British. They soon realized that "the special circumstances of Malayan society made it imperative for them to come to some understanding with moderate non-Malay leaders".⁷⁷ UMNO seemed more concerned about maintaining the relatively harmonious racial status quo. This brought dissatisfaction among the Malays towards UMNO's leaders when they did not openly declare their desire for independence but instead "chose to cooperate with the British" and basically were fighting "for the return to the pre-war status quo of Malay politics within the framework of British-protected policy".⁷⁸

It was in this context that ASAS 50 took action by organizing the Third Malay Language and Literature Congress in 1956, at which it suggested that political power from British colonial government should be obtained and the colonial administrative and educational systems should be abandoned and be replaced by a new system relevant to the aspirations of an independent '*bangsa*'.⁷⁹ Based on this action Kassim Ahmad regards ASAS 50 "as the offspring of the Malay and Malayan nationalism in the field of literature"⁸⁰ because most of its writers' works relate to these themes. By publishing their writings in popular publications such as *Utusan Zaman*, *Mastika* and *Hiburan*, the writers of ASAS 50 introduced elements which could give awareness to Malay readers with nationalist aspirations to fight for the independence of their country. They played an important role in raising awareness in society, in arousing their spirit and stimulating the ambition for independence.

The writers of ASAS 50 were concerned about the backwardness, poverty and difficult life of the Malay '*bangsa*' and played the role of "the fighter for social justice". They blamed the colonial power and their own elite for the situation.⁸¹ As Keris Mas stressed:

We criticized the defects in society and those groups whom we considered to have been the means of bringing those defects into being. We criticized the actions of colonialism and its tools, that is the upper strata, the strata whose spirit was stultified by the influence of feudalism and superstitious teachings, and old-fashioned teachings connected with religion.⁸²

No wonder in that period, as pointed out by Keris Mas, most short stories were concerned about their society. The objective was clear, that is, to portray that most Malays were still being oppressed, that they were a race of people who were being humiliated and that those who were poor suffered because of the social stratification in

their society and as a result of the colonial political and economic system which used irresponsible people as its tool.⁸³ The irresponsible people here refers to the Malay elite.

Thus, coupled with their distrust of the British, the Malay radicals were disillusioned with the British-groomed bureaucratic elites as well as with the traditional aristocratic elites. At best, these elites were perceived as being indifferent towards the masses' aspirations, while harsher critics regarded them as '*boneka penjajah*' (colonial puppets) or worse still, as '*pengkhianat bangsa sendiri*' (traitors to their own kind).⁸⁴ During British colonial rule, their attitude "retained the rigid division of Malay society into the ruling elite and the masses. It also produced a new phenomenon of the bureaucracy, a new group of Malay leaders, which served to reinforce the stratification". Besides "the members of the bureaucracy were a minority group who enjoyed both social status and economic well-being, and aligned with the British in the colonial government".⁸⁵ Large numbers of this elite group left the struggle for independence to the leaders of peasant background. It seems they were not concerned for the independence of the country which caused frustration among the peasant-based leaders. No less dissatisfied were the writers of ASAS 50 who mostly came from poor village families and were more acutely aware of the problems of their own race and their country.

As part of British colonial policy, the Malay elite and the aristocratic groups were given special privileges so that they would not rebel against the British. Thus, the British allowed the traditional chiefs to hold their position and titles, and this at least gave them the right to function ceremonially and to enjoy certain allowances. Also, immediately after the establishment of British control, a State Council (*Majlis Negeri*) was formed in each of the Malay states under the chairmanship of the sultan, with members drawn from both the indigenous and immigrant population in the respective states, and senior British officials. This gave some semblance of participation by the traditional chiefs in the deliberations over the affairs of the state. Finally, some chiefs were also absorbed into the state bureaucracy.⁸⁶ At a later stage when the bureaucracy became more specialized and complex, more offices were set up and more officers were appointed. These officers came mainly from the aristocratic group. Even though the bureaucracy became accessible to all classes, those who were admitted became influenced by feudalistic and western ideas due to their training and socialization.

In education, for instance, the Malay College in Kuala Kangsar (MCKK) was set up on 2 January 1905 by the British in order to produce "a generation of Malay civil servants who could be tailored to British needs and objectives", in other words "civil servants who would bear the British impress". Ungku Maimunah observed that it had a "decidedly class bias and the attendant notion of elitism".⁸⁷ From the very beginning it was intended that the MCKK should provide subordinate administrative talents drawn

from the Malay upper classes. Almost all the administrators in the Malay Administrative Service (MAS) were appointed from this college. After 1905, MCKK "began to accept other deserving students even though they were without aristocratic backgrounds".⁸⁸ However, MCKK's curriculum was markedly 'English' in orientation and "was tailored to lay emphasis on character-building, deportment and the inculcation of gentlemanly qualities, all of which were deemed crucial to the proper image of the British civil servant". It was not surprising that MCKK soon acquired the name "The Eton of the East". In other words, "MCKK students were consciously and deliberately moulded into bureaucrats who were anglicized".⁸⁹

Notwithstanding the limited administrative opportunities that the MAS offered, its role must be understood within the context of Malay society as a whole. The MAS had great political and social implications. It gave birth to a new leadership group that was Western-educated, English-speaking, imbibed with Western ideas and values, and whose association with the British administration endowed it with a considerable measure of social prestige. In the context of colonial Malaya in which the traditional framework of Malay society remained largely intact, the position of this group was thus a privileged one and removed from the masses. Further, MAS constituted the culmination of an education policy symbolized in the MCKK, the two becoming almost synonymous. This, in turn, means that MAS appointments could be made possible only by the British, who, in turn, reserved them for the traditional elite. This served to further consolidate the position of the aristocratic class, and left little room for mobility within the social structure.⁹⁰ It also shows how class bias was practised in society.

At the same time the established aristocratic lineages jealously guarded their position and always sought to better their status by marriage alliances with powerful families of the upper class. Marriage outside their class was consequently very rare so that there was little or no chance for a commoner to aspire to a place within the aristocratic community. This custom contributed towards social injustice when it created a stratified social system as emphasized in the Malay saying '*Enggang sama enggang, pipit sama pipit*' (hornbills with hornbill, sparrows with sparrows, that is, big birds assemble with big birds and small birds with small birds or 'like goes with like').⁹¹

To the more discerning members of the masses as represented by ASAS 50's writers, the class bias in society was obvious. These writers saw it as their duty to help expose this bias and change society's attitudes through their writings. Thus, the slogan '*Seni untuk Masyarakat*' is "the declaration of their conviction that literature must be committed to helping society"⁹² especially the masses. At a general meeting of ASAS 50 in 1956, Usman Awang proposed that "language and literature be made tools to unite the people towards independence, justice, prosperity and peace".⁹³ In similar vein Keris Mas

saw in '*Seni Untuk Masyarakat*' the useful role that literature could play in correcting the ills in society. To him, literature which is written with honesty can release the members of society from all pressures and oppression, free them from the constraints of imprisoned thoughts and souls which render them passive, fatalistic and static.⁹⁴ Therefore, ASAS 50's writers were urged to see themselves as the "new generation with an obligation to write about the theme of existence and struggle faced by the Malays especially the fight for independence at that time" so that "the root cause of the Malays being helpless and oppressed, suffering and humiliated could be exposed".⁹⁵

In 1957, British rule ended in Malaya. However, the economic and social gap between the Malays and the Chinese remained and was in fact widened. By 1966, the independent government formulated a specific plan to develop the nation, both socially and economically under the First Economic Plan (1966-1970). Several objectives were emphasized such as to promote the integration of society and of the states in Malaysia through the development plan and to improve the living standards of the rural people and of the lower income groups by increasing their productivity. Unfortunately, during the implementation of this first economic plan, racial tensions and conflict culminated on May 13, 1969 in serious riotings between Malays and Chinese. This resulted in 196 casualties⁹⁶ and shocked the nation. Analysis of the cause of the riots concluded they were "the result of the economic and social imbalances experienced by the racial groups".⁹⁷

From May 1969 to January 1971 (21 months) "there was soul-searching amongst the Malaysian elites, who were members of the National Consultative Council, in their attempt to restore 'national unity' in Malaysia".⁹⁸ As a result, Tun Razak, the second Prime Minister of Malaysia, "launched the New Economic Policy (NEP), a long-term social and economic policy, taking the Second Malaysia Plan (1971 - 1976) as the first stage of development". The NEP aimed at growth with equity and the main objective was to achieve national unity. To achieve this objective, "the Government unveiled a two-pronged strategy, namely the eradication of poverty and the simultaneous restructuring of society".⁹⁹

Thus, after achieving the objective of gaining its independence in 1957, the 1960s and 1970s saw Malaysia attempting to build a new nation. Both the eradication of poverty and the restructuring of society were central issues for the Malays and lay at the heart of what they perceived as 'their dilemma'. As we have seen, the question of poverty was of deep and continuing concern to the Malays who felt that they should have a bigger share of the wealth of their own country. In so far as the restructuring of society was an attempt was made by the government to unite the three main races, namely Malays, Chinese and Indians with their different cultural practices by sponsoring a congress on national culture

in 1971 with the aim of creating a culture of national unity.¹⁰⁰ The outcome of the 1971 Congress reflected Malay wants and demands. These momentous socio-economic changes in the country co-incided with Usman's development as a writer. It is therefore, almost inevitable that they would be an important influence on his thinking and in determining the issues he communicated to the masses through his writings.

Usman's Perception of His Role as a Writer

Usman Awang is a strong supporter of the concept '*Seni untuk Masyarakat*'. This concept was not supported by all Malay writers. In the early 1950s, there was a split in ASAS 50 over the question of the role of literature in society. Writers who supported the concept of '*Seni untuk Masyarakat*' were led by Asraf while those who took the more purist stand of '*Seni untuk Seni*' (Arts for Art's sake) was led by Hamzah.¹⁰¹ Asraf criticized some writers "who made their writings obscure and difficult to understand" because they were more concerned with '*Seni untuk Seni*'. To Asraf, the aim of a short story or poem should be to develop and be of benefit to the people. A short story or poem should be understood by the people who read them. However, Asraf's writings on the purpose and function of literature were rejected by his contemporary, Hamzah, who was strongly opposed to literature being made a tool or a weapon to improve society. Readers, Hamzah suggests, do not want a story with a moral, or literature which is propaganda. For Hamzah, literature is the means whereby a nation can pour out in writing what is in its innermost being.¹⁰²

Usman's stand can be clearly seen in his article "*Sajak dan Penyair*" (Poem and Poet) where he criticized some poets who were merely concerned to invent new words which resulted in their messages being difficult to understand by the readers and their work only meaningful to them alone.¹⁰³ As Usman stressed in another article "*Seni Sastera Melayu dan Pendukungnya*" (The Art of Malay Literature and Its Supporter) the supporters of the literary arts now "must show society their willingness to use literature in support of society".¹⁰⁴

Usman's support for functional literature is further mentioned in his article "*Pengalaman Saya Menulis Sajak*" (My Experiences in Writing Poems) that "literature must be for the people to create awareness in the hearts of the people, the reality of their situation in society now, what causes the situation, and to guide them in the right direction".¹⁰⁵ When Malaya was still under colonial rule, Usman urged "literature as the weapon for the people to overthrow the colonial power and to arouse the people to develop".¹⁰⁶ To him, this could be done if the writers expressed the voice of the people who live in distress and poverty while at the same time implanting dynamism in their

souls and guiding them in their lives. This is what he called "people's literature, literature of the people and for the people" because literature must produce "people with intelligent minds and critical souls" apart from being the voice of the masses.¹⁰⁷

In order to achieve this, Usman believed "a writer must plunge himself into the heart of society and the lives of the people".¹⁰⁸ Apart from that a writer is not merely a writer for "a writer is a thinker, a good observer of the life of society and its environment".¹⁰⁹ Therefore, to be a thinking writer and an analyst, Usman stresses:

A writer must know his society and for that he must not live away from his society. He must study his society and interpret it. For that reason a writer will look at an event and see it in relation to its cause and effect. If he looks at the poverty of society, he will ask why that poverty exists.¹¹⁰

More specifically, to Usman the role of a writer is to deepen and widen the awareness of people "about themselves and society in which they live, to educate and guide them towards development and independence, to fight for justice and purity, to form good manners and to lift up the '*bangsa*'s civilization".¹¹¹ Thus for Usman, if a writer lives in a country which is still being colonized, his duty is to rouse the people to fight for independence. If the writer lives in a society where most of the people are poor, starving and in distress, then it is his obligation to write about the misery of these people and expose the reason for the problem. If the writer lives in a 'crippled society', through his writing, the writer must show the true nature of that society and create awareness in the people so that they will fight to improve themselves.¹¹²

Usman believes that a writer cannot voice or portray the problems faced by society if he cannot express himself correctly. In this regard to Usman, "language is the first and most important tool for a writer".¹¹³ Therefore, to be a good writer, he or she must be able to govern the language as a tool to exploit the writer's message. Usman also believes that language is the important factor which links the writer and his society because it becomes a tool to express the feelings of the writer and his society apart from portraying the happiness and the sadness of his society.¹¹⁴ Thus, he uses short stories as one of the genres to express about life in general and the difficult life of his society, especially the masses.

Usman is closely linked to his society especially the masses, because of his own impoverished background. Furthermore, he has lived in a society where his own people were backward compared with the immigrant races. He was concerned about the backwardness of the Malays caused by the socio-political changes in the country. Thus, his involvement in ASAS 50 and later in PENA gave him a great opportunity to express his concern for his own '*bangsa*' which can be seen in many of his short stories.

Endnotes

- ¹ Usman Awang, "Pengalaman Saya Menulis Sajak" in Dinsman and Sutung Umar Rs (eds.), *Sikap dan Pemikiran Usman Awang*, Petaling Jaya: Penerbit Fajar Bakti, 1983, p. 102. He wrote: 'Saya jadi yatim sejak berumur lima tahun. Telah saya rasakan sendiri betapa rindunya saya kepada ibu saya, betapa inginnya saya melihat wajah ibu saya, betapa rindunya saya kepada kasih sayangnya, kasih sayang seorang ibu sejati, betapa saya merindukan belai dan usapnya ... Kemudian lahirlah sebuah sajak: *Ke Makam Bonda*'.
- ² Zurinah Hassan, *Sasterawan Negara Usman Awang*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1990, p. 3.
- ³ Zakry Abadi, "Usman yang Bergelar Tongkat", *Mastika*, Bilangan 3 Tahun 33, March 1973, p. 28.
- ⁴ Dinsman (ed.), *Koleksi Terpilih Sasterawan Negara Usman Awang*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1995, p. xiv stated 'Usman, jangan segan duduk di rumah mak cik. Buat macam rumah Usman sendiri. Kita semua sama saja. Tak ada beza Melayu dengan India. Darah kita sama merah. Yang bezakan manusia itu ialah kaya dan miskin, jahat dan baik.'
- ⁵ Keris Mas, *30 Tahun Sekitar Sastera*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1979, p. 141. Referring to Usman's novel *Tulang-tulang Berserakan*, Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Melayu Baru, 1966, p. 84, Anuar wrote a nationalism poem entitled "Semangat Merdeka" (Independence Spirit).
- ⁶ Published by Pustaka Melayu Baru, Kuala Lumpur, 1966.
- ⁷ Usman Awang, "Pengalaman Saya dalam Tahun-tahun 50-an" in Dinsman and Sutung Umar Rs (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 72. Also mentioned by Usman in his interview with the author on 31 March 1997 at his house No. 4 SS 1/33, Kampung Tunku, Petaling Jaya.
- ⁸ Keris Mas, *op. cit.*, p. 141.
- ⁹ Interview with Usman Awang.
- ¹⁰ Usman Awang, "Pengalaman Saya dalam Tahun-tahun 50-an" in Dinsman and Sutung Umar Rs (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 72 stated 'Apabila pada tahun 1951, saya meletakkan senapang dan melucutkan pakaian seragam polis dari badan, saya merasa semacam kebebasan, suatu perasaan yang tidak pernah saya dapat sebelumnya.'
- ¹¹ Dinsman (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. xvii stated 'Utusan Melayu pada waktu itu menjadi tempat tumpuan orang-orang politik dan orang-orang sastera. Keadaan ini membawa terjalannya suatu hubungan yang amat erat, malah boleh dikatakan mewujudkan suatu perkahwinan antara kesusasteraan dengan politik.'
- ¹² Said Zahari, "Mogok Utusan Kenapa dan Untuk Apa?", *Di Sebalik Jendela Utusan*, Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Melayu (Malaysia) Berhad, 1989, pp. 30-35. See also Chamil Wariya, "Dua Perspektif Mogok Utusan", *Di Sebalik Jendela Utusan*, Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Melayu (Malaysia) Berhad, 1989, pp. 43 - 47.
- ¹³ For details see Osman Abadi, "Mogok: Kebebasan Akhbar atau Satu Sengketa Politik", *Di Sebalik Jendela Utusan*, *ibid.*, pp. 36 - 42.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 39. See also Dinsman and Sutung Umar Rs (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 23.
- ¹⁵ *Wajah: Biografi Penulis*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1988, p. 622.
- ¹⁶ Dinsman (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. xv. See also Usman Awang, "Pengalaman Saya dalam Tahun-tahun 50-an" in Dinsman and Sutung Umar Rs (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 71, and Keris Mas, *op. cit.*, p. 140.
- ¹⁷ *Wajah: Biografi Penulis*, *op. cit.*, p. 623
- ¹⁸ Dinsman (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. xxxvii - xxxviii.
- ¹⁹ Kassim Ahmad, "ASAS 50 dan Sumber Ilhamnya", *Warisan ASAS 50*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1981, p. 18.
- ²⁰ Dinsman (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. xxxviii - xxxix stated 'Panel Anugerah Sastera Negara 1983 memilih cerpen ini (Sebuah Khemah Didirikan) sebagai puncak kejayaan Usman Awang dalam bidang cerpen. Menurut Panel: Pengarang dengan bijak membabakkan peristiwa-peristiwa pemogokan di samping menyorot bawah sedar daripada salah seorang pekerja yang ikut mogok itu.'
- ²¹ Interview with Usman Awang.
- ²² Ishak Haji Muhammad, A. Samad Ismail, Keris Mas, A. Samad Said and Shahnnon Ahmad.
- ²³ Ungku Maimunah Mohd. Tahir, *Modern Malay Literary Culture: A Historical Perspective*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1987, p. 34.
- ²⁴ For a recent study of ASAS 50, see Virginia Matheson Hooker, "Developing a Rhetoric for Malay Society: The Writings of the Generation of the 1950s (ASAS 50)", *Malay Literature*, Volume 8 Number 2, 1995, pp. 14 - 55. See also S. Husin Ali, "ASAS 50 dan Cita-cita Kemasyarakatan", *Warisan ASAS 50*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1981, p. 21.
- ²⁵ Keris Mas, *op. cit.*, p. 56.
- ²⁶ Firdaus Haji Abdullah, *Radical Malay Politics: Its Origins and Early Development*, Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 1985, p. 122.

- 27 Keris Mas, *op. cit.*, pp. 99 - 100. See also Virginia Matheson Hooker (1995), *op. cit.*, p. 19.
- 28 Quoted from Virginia Matheson Hooker (1995), *op. cit.*, p. 20. See also Keris Mas, *op. cit.*, p. 131.
- 29 Hendrik M.J. Maier, "A Chew of Sugarcane Ahmad Kotot's *Hikayat Percintaan Kasih Kemudaan*" in Zawawi Ibrahim (ed.), *Mediating Identities in a Changing Malaysia*, Reprinted from *Southeast Asian Studies*, Volume 34. Number 3, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, 1996, p. 85.
- 30 Syed Husin Ali, "Pertubuhan-pertubuhan Bahasa dan Sastra Melayu (di Singapura) Selepas Perang Dunia II (Khasnya ASAS 50)", B.A. (Hons.) thesis, University of Malaya, Singapore, 1959, p. 24. See also Virginia Matheson Hooker (1995), *op. cit.*, p. 20 and Ungku Maimunah Mohd. Tahir, *op. cit.*, p. 35 - 36.
- 31 Ismail Hussein, "Kata Pengantar" in Usman Awang, *Gelombang: Sajak-sajak Pilihan 1949 - 1960*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1963, p. vii.
- 32 Ungku Maimunah Mohd. Tahir, *op. cit.*, p. 37.
- 33 Keris Mas, *op. cit.*, p. 94.
- 34 *Mingguan Melayu*, 17 February 1952.
- 35 Keris Mas was the Information Officer of the banned PKMM (*Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya*), Temerloh branch while Asraf was an active member of the banned API (*Angkatan Pemuda Insaf*).
- 36 S. Husin Ali (1981), *op. cit.*, p. 26.
- 37 *Ibid.*, stated A. Samad Ismail was ex-secretary of GERAM (*Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia* or Malaysian People's Movement) while Dahari Ali and Salleh Daud, both of them at one time was ex-secretary of PKMM. Even A. Samad Ismail was an active member of KMM (*Kesatuan Melayu Muda* or Young Malay Union) under the leadership of Ibrahim Yaacob. For more details see A. Samad Ismail, *Memoir A. Samad Ismail di Singapura*, Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1993, p. 131.
- 38 Virginia Matheson Hooker (1995), *op. cit.*, pp. 20 - 21. See also Ungku Maimunah Mohd. Tahir, "Antara Kampung dan Kota: Rural Bias in the Novels of Shahnun Ahmad", Ph.D thesis, The Australian National University, 1984, p. 37.
- 39 S. Husin Ali (1981), *op. cit.*, p. 29.
- 40 Neville Potter, "The Short Stories of Usman Awang", B.A. (Hons.) thesis, The University of Sydney, 1967, p. 10.
- 41 Hendrik M. J. Maier, *op. cit.*, p. 86.
- 42 For details see Usman Awang's article "Mengenang Peristiwa Api dan Air Mata 3 Mac di Balai Budaya" in Dinsman and Sutung Umar Rs (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 182 - 186.
- 43 S. Husin Ali, *Malay Peasant Society and Leadership*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1975, pp. 26 - 27. See also Milner's new study of the development of political thinking in colonial Malay in Anthony Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya: Contesting Nationalism and the Expansion of the Public Sphere*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- 44 William R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit University Malaya, 1980, p. 57. See also Abdullah Haji Jaafar, "Al-Imam" in Khoo Kay Kim and Jazamuddin Baharuddin (eds.), *Lembaran Akhbar Melayu*, Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Sejarah Melayu, 1980, pp. 7 - 32.
- 45 S. Husin Ali (1975), *op. cit.*, p. 27.
- 46 Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y. Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1982, p. 249.
- 47 Ungku Maimunah Mohd. Tahir (1987), *op. cit.*, p. 5.
- 48 Mohd. Kornain Hashim, "Soal Kaum Imigren dalam Akhbar Melayu 1930" in Khoo Kay Kim and Jazamuddin Baharuddin (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 97. See also Firdaus Haji Abdullah, *op. cit.*, pp. 58 - 59.
- 49 William R. Roff, *op. cit.*, p. 209.
- 50 For further discussions see Mohd. Kornain Hashim, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-104. See also Firdaus Haji Abdullah, *op. cit.*, pp. 58 - 59.
- 51 Ariffin Omar, *Bangsa Melayu: Malay Concepts of Democracy and Community 1945 - 1950*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 18.
- 52 Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y. Andaya, *op. cit.*, pp. 252 - 253.
- 53 Firdaus Haji Abdullah, *op. cit.*, pp. 63 - 64.
- 54 Virginia Matheson Hooker, *Writing a New Society: Social Change Through the Novel in Malay*, St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, in press, p. 103.
- 55 Firdaus Haji Abdullah, *op. cit.*, p. 63 - 64.
- 56 William, R. Roff, *op. cit.*, p. 232.
- 57 Ungku Maimunah Mohd. Tahir (1987), *op. cit.*, p. 33.
- 58 Wang Gungwu (ed.), *Malaysia: A Survey*, London: Pall Mall Press, 1964, p. 143.
- 59 S. Husin Ali (1981), *op. cit.*, pp. 27 - 28.

- 60 Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y. Andaya, *op. cit.*, p. 250.
- 61 Ungku Maimunah Mohd. Tahir (1987), *op. cit.*, pp. 33 - 34.
- 62 Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y. Andaya, *op. cit.*, p. 253.
- 63 M.V. del Tufo, *Malaya: A Report on the 1947 Census of Population*, London: HMSO, 1949, pp. 40, 84 - 85. Quoted from Ariffin Omar, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
- 64 For details see Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y. Andaya, *op. cit.*, pp. 254 - 257.
- 65 A.M. Thani, "Peranan dan Kesan Tokoh-tokoh ASAS 50", *Warisan ASAS 50*, *op. cit.*, p. 59.
- 66 Firdaus Haji Abdullah, *op. cit.*, p. 120.
- 67 *Ibid.*, pp. 120 - 121.
- 68 *Majlis*, 4 February 1955. Quoted from Aminah Mohd. Nasir, "Majlis 1951 - 1955" in Khoo Kay Kim and Jazamuddin Baharuddin (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 158.
- 69 Aminah Mohd. Nasir, *ibid.*, pp. 157 - 158.
- 70 Ungku Maimunah Mohd. Tahir (1987), *op. cit.*, p. 39.
- 71 Quoted from Aminah Mohd. Nasir, *op. cit.*, p. 165.
- 72 *Ibid.*, pp. 158 - 159.
- 73 Usman Awang, "Seni Sastera Melayu dan Pendukungnya", *Utusan Zaman*, 17 August 1952.
- 74 Keris Mas, *op. cit.*, p. 159.
- 75 *Ibid.*, p. 161.
- 76 For details see *Memoranda Angkatan Sasterawan 50*, Petaling Jaya: Penerbit Fajar Bakti, 1987, pp. 8 - 9.
- 77 Keris Mas, *op. cit.*, p. 61.
- 78 Firdaus Haji Abdullah, *op. cit.*, p. 44.
- 79 Kassim Ahmad, *op. cit.*, p. 13.
- 80 *Ibid.*, p. 14.
- 81 *Ibid.*, p. 16.
- 82 Quoted from Virginia Matheson Hooker (1995), *op. cit.*, p. 20. See also Keris Mas, *op. cit.*, p. 131.
- 83 Keris Mas, *op. cit.*, p. 78.
- 84 Firdaus Haji Abdullah, *op. cit.*, p. 7.
- 85 Ungku Maimunah Mohd. Tahir (1987), *op. cit.*, pp. 38 - 39.
- 86 S. Husin Ali (1975), *op. cit.*, p. 20.
- 87 Ungku Maimunah Mohd. Tahir (1987), *op. cit.*, p. 16. For more detail on MCKK see Khasnor Johan, *Educating the Malay Elite: The Malay College Kuala Kangsar, 1905 - 1941*, Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Antara, 1996.
- 88 S. Husin Ali (1975), *op. cit.*, p. 21.
- 89 Ungku Maimunah Mohd. Tahir (1987), *op. cit.*, pp. 17 - 18. See also Khasnor Johan, *op. cit.*, pp. 221 - 222.
- 90 Ungku Maimunah Mohd. Tahir (1987), *op. cit.*, pp. 18 - 19.
- 91 Khasnor Johan, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
- 92 Virginia Matheson Hooker (1995), *op. cit.*, p. 17.
- 93 Dinsman and Sutung Umar Rs (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 4.
- 94 Keris Mas, *op. cit.*, p. 133.
- 95 *Ibid.*, p. 132.
- 96 Harold Crouch, *Government and Society in Malaysia*, St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1996, p. 24 stated 196 were officially reported killed, the majority Chinese, but the figure was believed to be much higher.
- 97 A. Wahab Ali, "Voices of the Poets in Malaysian Socio-economic Development", Inaugural Lecture for Professor in the Malay Studies at Leiden University on 8 October 1996, p. 5.
- 98 Shamsul, A.B., "Debating About Identity in Malaysia: A Discourse Analysis" in Zawawi Ibrahim (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 28.
- 99 A. Wahab Ali, *op. cit.*, pp. 6 - 7.
- 100 Harold Crouch, *op. cit.*, p. 166 stated that a congress on national culture in 1971 adopted three principles in defining the national culture. These are :
- i. National culture must be based on the indigenous culture of this region.
 - ii. Suitable elements from other cultures can be accepted as part of the national culture.
 - iii. Islam is an important component in the moulding of the national culture.
- 101 For a recent study see Virginia Matheson Hooker (1995), *op. cit.*, pp. 22 - 34.
- 102 *Ibid.*, pp. 24 - 25.

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- 103 Usman Awang, "*Sajak dan Penyair*" in Usman Awang and A. Samad Said, *Tema dan Tugas Sastra Melayu Modern*, Kuala Lumpur: Penerbitan Federal Berhad, 1963, p. 52.
- 104 Usman Awang, "*Seni Sastra Melayu dan Pendukungnya*", *Utusan Zaman*, 17 August 1952.
- 105 Dinsman and Sutung Umar Rs (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 96.
- 106 Usman Awang, "*Kesusasteraan Alat Penting Mengisi Kemerdekaan*", *Mingguan Melayu*, 9 March 1952.
- 107 *Ibid.*
- 108 Usman Awang, "*Pengalaman Saya Menulis Sajak*" in Dinsman and Sutung Umar Rs (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 99.
- 109 Usman Awang, "*Sastra dan Masyarakat*" in Dinsman and Sutung Umar Rs (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 82.
- 110 *Ibid.*, pp. 82 - 83.
- 111 Usman Awang, "*Pengertian Bakat, Ilham dan Tugas Sastrawan*", *Utusan Zaman*, 21 March 1954.
- 112 *Ibid.*
- 113 Usman Awang, "*Gaya Bahasa*" in A. Bakar Hamid and Usman Awang (eds.), *Panduan Menulis Cerpen*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1984, p. 34.
- 114 Usman Awang, "*Sastra dan Masyarakat*" in Dinsman and Sutung Umar Rs (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 80.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CONCEPT OF *BANGSA*

This chapter will examine the concept of '*bangsa*' (race, nation) which is explored in a number of Usman Awang's short stories. The main aim of this chapter is to show how this term has been used, altered and redefined by the historical and cultural contexts of the time, how it has changed to bear its current meaning and how Usman develops it as a key concept in his vision of Malay society. Other related terms such as '*kaum*' (race) and '*orang*' (person) are also discussed as added dimensions of '*bangsa*'.

The Term *Bangsa*

The term '*bangsa*' first appeared in Malay writing in *Sejarah Melayu* (The Malay Annals), a traditional court text which was probably written in the seventeenth century. Here '*bangsa*' was used to describe royal descent when Malay Sultans were described as descendants of Alexander the Great.¹ In '*kerajaan*' texts (literature of the Malay sultanates where the significance of the rulers in Malay society is most powerfully expressed), '*bangsa*' was generally used to refer to 'descent'. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, '*bangsa*' seemed to have been increasingly used to refer to 'race'. Hence we find the phrases '*bangsa India*', '*bangsa Bugis*' and '*bangsa Melayu*' being frequently cited in texts of the period.²

Interestingly enough, the etymology of the word '*bangsa*' comes from the Sanskrit *vamsa*, which embraces the terms "genealogy, lineage, race, family".³ The term is defined in the first edition of the *Kamus Dewan*, the standard dictionary of contemporary Malay usage, as a type of people of common ancestry; a group of people in one citizenship; kind, type; gender; high status, noble descent. When the prefix '*se*' is added to the root word '*bangsa*' and it becomes '*sebangsa*' it then means same '*bangsa*', one '*bangsa*'; same kind, same type. When the prefix '*ber*' is added to the root word and becomes '*berbangsa*' it means included in, is a part of the '*bangsa*'; from a noble descent; akin. While the word '*kebangsaan*' is formed on the Malay language '*ke....an*' construction on the root word to mean related to the country on the whole, national; chosen as the symbol of a country's identity such as language, clothing; a song being specially composed to express loyalty to the country. There is another word, '*bangsawan*', which means people who are '*berbangsa*', that is people of noble descent although another meaning of '*bangsawan*' is a kind of theatrical performance.⁴ On the other hand the words '*rupa bangsa*' mean citizenship, characteristics (way of life) of the

'bangsa'.⁵ All these words are found in Usman's short stories which will be discussed in this chapter.

The terms '*kebangsaan*' (nationalism), '*rupa bangsa*' (citizenship) and '*negara bangsa*' (nation-state) are important concepts in Malay political culture. According to the historian, Abdul Rahman Haji Ismail, the feeling of being threatened and the possibility of vanishing as a '*bangsa*' stimulated the Malay race to express a sense of collectiveness and unity in facing other races as foreigners moved into Malaya.⁶ Here, one's '*bangsa*' becomes the object of loyalty. This created among the '*bangsa Melayu*' (Malay race) the spirit of nationalism (*semangat kebangsaan*). Professor Virginia Hooker defines the Malays' concern for their own '*bangsa*' (race) and their fear that they would be left behind in their own homeland compared to other races as 'ethno-nationalism' rather than 'nationalism' because they do not identify the State as a concept or object of loyalty.⁷ Thus, we can see that the term '*bangsa*' has a close relationship with the term '*kebangsaan*' when we talk about love of one's '*bangsa*' and the awareness of the problems faced by one's '*bangsa*'.

The term '*bangsa*' was widely used by Usman in his short stories. In his earliest short stories, he frequently uses the term '*bangsa*' to refer to his own race which in his opinion was more backward than the other races, especially the Chinese. Here, Usman shows his ethno-nationalism. In the following section I will discuss the socio-political background which has influenced Usman Awang towards Malay nationalism so that we will have a clear picture of Usman's ideology and thinking.

Usman Awang and the Socio-political Environment in Malaya/Malaysia

i. Usman Awang's Responses to Malay Nationalism

The drive behind Usman's Malay nationalist spirit can be traced back to his early days as a policeman in Melaka in 1947. His interest was sparked off by the spirited speeches he heard from Malay nationalist leaders such as Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, Ahmad Boestamam and Shamsiah Fakeh. One particular speech, by the charismatic Dr. Burhanuddin Helmy, left a lasting and major impact on the young Usman for he quotes part of it in his only novel, *Tulang-tulang Berserakan*.⁸ In the novel, he describes the effect of nationalistic speeches on an audience, one of whom is the young policeman, Leman.

As with the character Leman in the novel, the same stirring words, '*Di atas robohan kota Melaka, Kita bangunkan jiwa merdeka*' (On the ruins of Melaka fort, We

build the spirit of independence) proclaimed by Dr. Burhanuddin Helmy, struck a deep chord within Usman's heart, an impact which would reverberate throughout the themes and plots of his later works.⁹ The phrase was repeatedly used by Usman in many of his writings, such as in a poem entitled "*Jiwa Hamba*" (Slave's Soul) which was published in *Utusan Zaman* on 22 March 1949 and in a short story entitled "*Cinta di Negara Hang Tuah*" (Love in the Land of Hang Tuah) which was published in *Utusan Zaman* on 12 February 1950.

This clearly shows that Usman admired the PKMM's leader's ideology with the main aim of redressing the fate of the '*bangsa Melayu*' who had been left behind in development and progress for hundreds of years. Its slogan was '*Membela Hak dan Keadilan Putera Melayu*' which means "To Protect the Rights of and (To obtain) Justice for the Malays".¹⁰ In fact, the term '*bangsa*' in the sense of 'race' was used in four out of the eight-points program adopted by PKMM in its inaugural congress on 30 November 1945 in Ipoh, Perak.¹¹

In the *Oxford English Dictionary* the term 'race' refers to "a group of persons, connected by common descent or origin".¹² It is clear that PKMM saw the Malay race as those connected by common descent or origin. PKMM's concern about the Malay race was highlighted in its newspaper, *Pelita Malaya* which first appeared on 4 March 1946 in which it states that its aim is to propagate the political struggle of PKMM which is based on the axiom '*Tanah Melayu bagi Bangsa Melayu*' (Malay Land belongs to the Malay Race).¹³

The concept to which the PKMM ideologies made the most contribution was that of '*kebangsaan*' or nationalism based on loyalty to the country where the PKMM's aim was to achieve independence for the '*bangsa*' and homeland.¹⁴ From the outset, the PKMM was an ethno-centric Malay party. Its vision for a Malay nation was not confined to the Malay Peninsula but encompassed all the Malay-speaking peoples within one political entity, in which the '*bangsa Melayu*' in Malaya would be reunited again with their Indonesian kith and kin as had been the case during the time of the Majapahit Empire before colonialism separated them.¹⁵ The PKMM concept of '*bangsa Melayu*' was outlined by Dr. Burhanuddin in his book entitled *Perjuangan Kita* (Our Struggle).¹⁶

API, the youth wing of PKMM which was led by Ahmad Boestamam, on the other hand, was more radical. As stated in the *Testament Politik API-Merdeka dengan Darah* (Political Testament of API - Independence with Blood), it would fight for full independence for Malaya but "Independence cannot be attained through saliva (by talking) or begging, it has to be wrested by spilling the blood of youth".¹⁷ In fact this was the

reason why the API battle cry was not just 'MERDEKA' (Independence) but 'MERDEKA' through BLOOD.¹⁸

Since the mid 1940s, PKMM and API were influential parties in Malaya. However, Usman Awang has never been a member of any political organization,¹⁹ even though he had seriously considered joining either the PKMM or API²⁰ in 1947. As a policeman however, as he was at that time, he was prohibited by regulation from joining any political party or being involved in any political action. This however, did not stop Usman sympathising with the aims of the Malay nationalist movement,²¹ and often he secretly solicited donations from his friends for the PKMM.

The reason Usman was never a member of any political party as he stressed in a personal interview was that as a writer, he did not want his voice to be limited by a party's ideology.²² However Usman's empathy for the Malay nationalist cause can clearly be witnessed as early as 1952 in one of his articles entitled "*Kesusasteraan ialah Ilmu Pengetahuan yang Dipunyai oleh Seluruh Bangsa*" (Literature is a Knowledge Owned by the Whole *Bangsa*).²³ He expresses his nationalist hopes by exclaiming:

To the entire '*bangsa Melayu*', I urge you, let us work together, support one another and help each other. Fire up your working spirit, the spirit to uphold our cause, and sow the spirit of critical thinking in every one of us, so that the '*bangsa Melayu*' will become a great and dynamic race and not dead in the way it exists.

This declaration coincided with the proclamation of ASAS 50 (Literary Generation of the 1950s) that "the struggle of the 1950s Literary Generation is the struggle of the fans and enthusiasts of the Malay language and literature which is launched with political and social consciousness and the realization that national unity is important to achieve national freedom".²⁴ Usman and other ASAS 50 writers may be broadly classified as nationalist writers "who wanted progressive change for their society".²⁵ Therefore there is a link between politics and literature where the writers of ASAS 50 used literature as the tool for influencing political change in the country. This relationship can be seen in a report in the newspaper *Melayu Raya* on 11 November 1950, which stated that ASAS 50 had appointed two former top ranking leaders of the PKMM as its general advisers. They were PKMM's first national president and later, supreme adviser, Dr. Burhanuddin Helmy and its former treasurer and chairman for cultural affairs, Harun Aminurrashid. The inclusion of the two former PKMM national leaders at a high level in ASAS 50's affairs signified two main phenomena. First, from the point of view of the young writers who founded the organization, it signified their desire to use literature as a means of continuing the radicalism of the PKMM. Second, their willingness to accept the two former PKMM leaders indicated their resolve in continuing to play a leading role in radical Malay politics. Perhaps they regarded it as a reinforcement of '*cita-cita perjuangan*', the ultimate aims of the struggle.²⁶

The sympathy shown by Usman towards Malay nationalist parties, and his admiration of the PKMM's leaders, especially Dr. Burhanuddin Helmi, moulded Usman's awareness of Malay nationalism. But while Usman Awang appears to accept the PKMM's more inclusive approach to the term '*bangsa*' in general, in his short stories, however, he was more concerned with the Malay race in Malaya. Thus, Usman begins to express his concern for the backwardness of his own race in his short stories. However, Usman did not just put forward the idea of the backwardness of the Malays but he also sought at the same time to highlight their good qualities. By doing so he was presenting Malay examples of positive models and qualities which he no doubt hoped would inspire them to imitate.

ii. Usman Awang as a Journalist with *Utusan Melayu*

Utusan Melayu is a newspaper which was first published in 1939. According to Said Zahari, a former *Utusan Melayu* editor since 1939, its objective was to work for '*bangsa*', religion and country. Through its editorials and articles *Utusan Melayu* has helped enormously in arousing the spirit of nationality and planting the determination in Malays to struggle for independence. *Utusan Melayu* even encouraged the feeling of hatred and disgust towards colonialism, and condemned oppression and degradation by others of the Malays.²⁷ When the British attempted to introduce the Malayan Union in Malaya in 1946, *Utusan Melayu* played a leading role in arousing the '*bangsa Melayu*' to rise and struggle against colonialism. The journalists of *Utusan Melayu* wrote with two aims: "to achieve independence for Malaya and to arouse the spirit of Malay nationalism in the Malay race".²⁸ While Usman was with *Utusan Melayu*, he had the opportunity to meet a number of the leading radical Malay nationalists who were working there such as A. Samad Ismail, Ishak Haji Mohammad, Yusoff Ishak, Melan Abdullah, Zabha (Zainol Abidin Haji Alias), Osman Wok and Said Zahari.²⁹ Through contact with these individuals either during office hours or after, Usman was much influenced by the ideas of Malay nationalism. His Malay nationalist fervour could also be linked to his close friendship with Keris Mas and Asraf, both of whom worked for *Utusan Melayu* and were members of ASAS 50. Further, Keris Mas was a former member of PKMM while Asraf was a former member of API.³⁰

iii. Usman Awang as a Journalist for *Melayu Raya*

Usman's nationalist feelings grew even stronger after he left the police force and started work with the newspaper *Melayu Raya* in October 1951. This was possible because he was no longer constrained by police force regulations. Besides that he was

becoming increasingly influenced by the members of the editorial board of *Melayu Raya* such as Dr. Burhanuddin and Mohammad Taha Kalu. *Melayu Raya* was published by a company called Syarikat Melayu Raya Press Ltd. which was set up on 4 July 1947 by Dr. Burhanuddin, Harun Aminurrashid and a few of their colleagues. The company had to wait for more than three years to accumulate enough capital by selling its shares to the public, before the first issue of the *Melayu Raya* daily went to press on 29 August 1950.³¹ As mentioned by Mohammad Taha Kalu, who was PKMM's acting president when the party was dissolved, *Melayu Raya* was set up as the mouthpiece of the '*orang-orang kiri*' (the leftists) and to carry on the struggle of the PKMM.³²

The nationalist content of the press is clear in the inaugural issue of *Melayu Raya*. That issue contained a message from Dr. Burhanuddin in which he whipped up Malay emotions by emphasizing that the Malays were the rightful owners of the country and therefore "(they) should be the ones to chart its course and its future".³³ This was followed by the editorial columns in the second and third issues dealing with the problems of the Malay economy and Malay education, respectively. On other occasions, the editorials dealt with such nationalist issues as the plight of Malay fishermen who were exploited by Chinese middlemen, the need to nationalize tin, rubber and other important industries, and the need for Malaya to have her own national army in order to replace the British army.³⁴

Being in this environment, and already sympathetic to the aims of PKMM, Usman was naturally influenced by such ideas. This can be clearly seen for while he was with *Melayu Raya*, he published a number of short stories which seemed aimed at kindling the spirit of ethno-nationalism. These were "*Kenalan Baru*" (A New Acquaintance)³⁵ and "*Terbitnya Matahari Pagi*" (The Morning Sun Rises)³⁶ both published in 1951, and "*Menuju Hidup*" (Towards a New Life)³⁷ which was published in 1952.

In the early 1950s, Usman believed that for the Malays to progress and be respected by other races they should have a sense of unity and love for their own arts and culture besides being interested in involving themselves in national associations such as ASAS 50. At the same time the Malays should throw away their negative qualities in order to compete with other races. These issues are raised by Usman in a number of his short stories.

Usman Awang's Short Stories on *Bangsa Melayu*

When Usman deals exclusively with the Malay race, his concept of '*bangsa*' rests on the notion that the Malay race has to find a way to survive and preserve its rightful

place in Malaya, in particular, and among the world community, in general. His approach towards this aim was two pronged. Firstly Malays should strive to preserve and perpetuate cultural elements that were beneficial to the '*bangsa*'. This would involve encouraging the growth and the development of some aspects of Malay culture and customs which were integral to the identity of the '*bangsa*'. Secondly, the Malay '*bangsa*' has to change so that it would not be left behind in the race towards progress. In order to achieve this Malays must reject features that could hinder Malay survival and progress such as certain negative attitudes and outdated social practices.

The Concept of *Bangsa Melayu*

A. The Preservation and Development of Malay Cultural Heritage

i. Malay Performing Arts

The short story, "*Peristiwa Bunga Telur*" (The Egg Flower Incident)³⁸ published on 24 April 1949, revolves around the idea of one's devotion to Malay arts and culture. Awang, the protagonist of this story, and his friends attend a Malay cultural performance. They give a donation to show their support and Awang is then urged by his friends to deliver a speech. His speech is full of encouragement for the Malay performing arts. At the end of the show the manager of the theatre group, in gratitude, invites Awang and his friends to come to tea the next day. Awang leaves the tea party with a letter which was handed to him by a little boy. It is from Siti Rohani, a beautiful singer in the theatre group who had attracted Awang's attention during the performance the night before. In the letter, Siti Rohani expresses her pleasure at the fact that there are some people who appreciate the performance and hopes: "those groups in our race who before looked down on their own race's arts will now feel remorseful and will give their support in all ways in order to uplift our arts".³⁹

It is clear that Usman begins his story from the standpoint that the Malay performing arts have not been well appreciated within the Malay community. Thus Awang, the main character in the story, states in his speech "we will feel ashamed to be humiliated by society if we still look down on the arts of our race".⁴⁰ It is implied that Malay theatre had not had a high standing in society at that point in time. As mentioned by the character, Siti Rohani, in the story, there are Malays who even "look down on their own race's arts" (*merendahkan kesenian bangsa*). The emphasis is on the word '*merendahkan*' which indicates the sorry state in which the Malay performing arts have found themselves. Therefore, when Awang and his friends show their support it is seen

by Siti Rohani as a good sign and one which she hopes will encourage other Malays to be more aware of the need to appreciate Malay theatre.

However, it is not only because of the desire to see the arts flourishing that Usman sees the value in encouraging an interest in them. In the story, the notion is expressed through the character Awang that "any race will not develop well if its arts and culture are lagging far behind".⁴¹ Thus the arts and culture are integral parts of a race and real progress of a race is inevitably measured by the standard achieved by its arts and culture. Therefore, to Usman, the uplift (*kebangkitan*) and development (*maju*) of Malay performing arts are essential elements in his concept of '*bangsa*'.

In order to preserve and develop Malay performing arts, Malays must learn not only to appreciate Malay theatre but must also support it. In the story a group of young Malay men is shown not only to sit through a Malay theatrical performance but they also indicate in various ways their appreciation and support of it. Awang implies in his speech that he and his friends are duty bound to support the Malay performing arts and that if they fail to do so they would be ashamed to face the people. Thus the message is conveyed that it is the duty of all Malays to ensure that their arts develop and that they should endeavour in all possible ways to achieve this development.

The words '*dihina oleh masyarakat*' (to be humiliated by society) appear to mean not Malay society but society at large. Thus in this story, Usman contends that the arts are linked with the honour and reputation of the '*bangsa*'. Therefore, if Malays look down on their own arts then they would be humiliated by other races. In other words, if Malays are not proud of their own arts then they would convince the other races that Malay arts are inferior. For that reason Malays should wholeheartedly and in every possible way support (*menyokong*) the development of Malay arts '*menyokong dengan segala rupa atas kebangkitan kesenian kita*' (will support in every way in order to uplift our arts).

One's love towards the arts and culture of one's race would indirectly mean loving one's race as well. Here Usman clearly spoke through Awang's speech, voicing his love for Malay arts and culture and therefore expressing his love towards his own race as well. In other words, Usman questions how the Malays could be respected by other races if they themselves do not respect and love their own arts and culture? This is because the arts and culture could be considered as the '*maruah bangsa*' (prestige of the '*bangsa*'). Therefore if the '*maruah bangsa*' is low because of being humiliated that means the '*bangsa*' will have a low status and will not be respected by other races. On the other hand, to Usman if Malay arts and culture are being loved and developed by the Malays, the Malay race will rise in the estimation of others and will be respected by other races.

The word '*bangsa*' in this story refers to the Malay race as can be seen in the phrase '*andainya kami masih merendahkan kesenian bangsa kami*'. The words '*kesenian bangsa kami*' (the arts of our race) refer specifically to the Malay arts, a point clearly stated at the end of the story through the phrase '*kesenian dan kebudayaan Melayu*' (Malay arts and culture). Usman indirectly manifests his own appreciation of Malays who value their arts and culture by allowing Awang to bestow a donation on behalf of his friends to the theatre group which has committed itself and its efforts to the development of Malay arts and culture. Therefore, in this context, the term '*bangsa*' used by the author refers to 'Malay race', a perception influenced by the nationalist speeches Usman listened to, where they equate the term '*bangsa*' with 'race'.

ii. Malay Literature

The preservation and development of the arts is not only confined to Malay theatre as seen in the above story but extends also to Malay literature. Usman's ideas on the preservation and development of Malay literature are dealt with through the discussions of three characters, Taib, Majid and Hamid in a short story entitled "*Menuju Hidup*" (Towards a New Life)⁴² published in January 1952. In the story the three young Malays who live together in a small room are members of ASAS 50. They are active in literary writings and are beginning to be well-known to fans of Malay literature. As room mates, their conversations range from questions about the meaning of life to the state of Malay literature. In one scene when they discuss the position of Malay literature, Majid expresses the opinion that "If we want our literature to develop and speed up the process of independence for the '*bangsa*', we must use Roman characters and not '*jawi*' (Arabic) script in our literature. For in this way we, or for that matter our friends in Indonesia and also the international world, can read it".⁴³ He then asserts that "the standard of the literature and development of our '*bangsa*' will continue to remain low, so long as we fail to change from the '*jawi*' script to the Roman alphabet".⁴⁴

Just as it was expressed in relation to the Malay performing arts, here Usman also implies that Malay literature is at risk of lagging behind. He sees the risk as being related to the fact that it is being written in a script that is understood only by Malays thus limiting its readership. Usman believes that a wider readership would help Malay literature to flourish and develop and envisions Malay literature being read by a wider Malay audience, which includes the Indonesian people, as well as people from other parts of the world. This in turn would help in speeding up independence for the country and ultimately assist in the development of the '*bangsa*'.

Usman therefore sees the romanisation of the Malay script as an integral part of the modernisation process. However, he was also aware that modernisation meant to some extent westernisation and in the context of their struggle for independence at that stage in Malaysian history, Usman realized that any move to discard the '*jawi*' script or even to reduce its usage would meet with accusations of trying to ape the British. Thus in the story, the dilemma is addressed when Taib asks Majid if using Roman characters would make it '*seperti tulisan orang putih*' (like the writing of the white man). Majid's response to this is that '*ini hanya suatu pendapat yang meracun fikiran siuman dan membunuh kemajuan*' (this is an opinion which poisons a sane mind and kills progress). He gives the analogy of wearing western clothes which is more convenient and cheaper rather than using the Malay costume. It seems that Usman wants to stress that changing the script is only a matter of changing form and not of substance and that while the appearance changes the identity remains intact. Therefore, Usman believes that by changing from the '*jawi*' script to romanised Malay it does not mean that Malays will lose their identity. Here Usman stresses that progress (*kemajuan*) and modernisation in general, and of literature in particular, would not mean a loss of Malay identity. On the contrary it would ensure recognition for the Malay world-wide.

It should be noted that the idea of using romanised characters in Malay literature was discussed and accepted by the participants of the second all-Malayan Congress of Malay Writing (*Kongress Persuratan Melayu se-Malaya*) which was held in Seremban on 1 and 2 January 1954. At this congress a resolution was moved that: "we take the decision that it is appropriate to make romanised writing the official form of writing for Malay literature, without doing away with Arabic (*jawi*) writing until time determines it".⁴⁵

Usman's thinking could be considered far advanced because quite early he realized that not many people knew '*jawi*'. Furthermore he seemed to anticipate that in the future '*jawi*' would not be commonly known to the young generation of Malays. This has in fact happened in Malaysia where not many Malays of the younger generation know '*jawi*' because it is not regarded as an important component of the learning process in schools.

The preference for '*rumi*' (Roman alphabet) over '*jawi*' that was formally expressed by Usman in his short story was further strengthened by him in a paper he wrote with Asraf for the Third Congress of Malay Literature and Writing (*Kongress Bahasa dan Persuratan Melayu III*) held in Singapore and Johor Bahru in 1956. In this paper "*Memorandum Mengenai Tulisan Rumi untuk Bahasa Melayu*" (Memorandum on Romanised Characters for Malay Language) he stresses the important reasons for using

romanised characters. One of the reasons is to unite and strengthen the ties between the Malays in Malaya and those in Indonesia. He stresses:

By using romanised characters it could help to link and even to standardize and unify the Malay language in Malaya and the Malay language in Indonesia. When Malay language in Malaya and Malay language in Indonesia is standardized or unified, then the exchange of ideas through books, newspapers and others in Romanised characters could be improved further than is happening now. With this relationship through knowledge between these two territories which use the Malay language the blood and cultural ties between our '*bangsa*' in Malaya and other Malay '*bangsa*' in Indonesia can be preserved and continue to be close in line with our mutual ambitions up to now.⁴⁶

The idea of striving for closer ties with Indonesia through the development of Malay literature is an effort to bolster the position of the Malays. Usman's concern about the Malay race through the development of Malay literature can also be seen in his article entitled "*Kesusasteraan ialah Ilmu Pengetahuan yang Dipunyai oleh Seluruh Bangsa*" (Literature is a Knowledge Owned by the *Bangsa* as a Whole) in which he hopes all '*bangsa Melayu*' will love and develop Malay literature because "through this the development of the Malay race will be judged and respected by other races in this world".⁴⁷ In another article "*Seni Sastera Melayu dan Pendukungnya*" (The Art of Malay Literature and Its Supporters) he argues that "Malay literature is very important for the struggle of Malay race", therefore "to revive and develop Malay literature means to revive and develop Malay race".⁴⁸ He urges '*bangsa Melayu*' to work hard with all their strength and effort to revive and develop Malay literature because Malay literature can be considered as the '*maruah bangsa*' (prestige of the '*bangsa*') and it will be judged, seen and evaluated by other races in this world. Thus, he believes that Malay literature has very close links with '*perjuangan kebangsaan*' (struggle for nationalism).⁴⁹

Furthermore Usman believes that Malay literature can play a social and political role and in this he was inspired by ASAS 50's Memorandum, a document developed and adopted at the 1956 Malay Language and Literature Congress:

From its inception in August 1950, the Generation of Writers of the Fifties has moved together with (members of this Congress in particular and) society as a whole, with a firm attitude and standpoint, namely that language and literature are a means towards creating nationalism and a tool in the fight for independence: that language and literature are a means towards uplifting people's thoughts, in line with the ideals of social equality, prosperity, peace and harmony.⁵⁰

Usman realizes that the roles of the ASAS 50 and literature are important in strengthening the collective community spirit of the Malays and in raising the Malays to higher standards of achievement.

The scene in the story "*Menuju Hidup*" is set amongst Malays, discussing their concerns about Malay literature, with a specific reference to the '*jawi*' script then used by the majority of Malays. It is quite clear then that the term '*bangsa kita*' he uses here refers to 'our Malay race'. Here again Usman through the characters gives his idea on the development (*kemajuan*) of Malay literature which will effect the development (*kemajuan*) of the Malays. In other words he relates the development (*kemajuan*) of Malay literature with the development (*kemajuan*) of the Malays in his idea of '*bangsa*'.

iii. Malay Language

In the short story entitled "*Kisah Pertama*" (First Story)⁵¹ published in July 1954 which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5 on leadership, the preservation and promotion of the Malay language is one of several themes. The story contains a scene in which there is a discussion between Jid and Kassim, two young men from a village. They are concerned with the use of the English and the Malay languages. Regarding the English language, Kassim criticizes the status given to English when he becomes aware that Jid studies English in his spare time. He queries why Jid does not learn his own language and asks if he thinks the Malay language is not important. He also asks in what way English can help to improve the lives of the poor people in the villages. At the same time he queries the role of English in making people rich. Here Usman's sense of nationalism questions the unfairness and social division brought about by the use of the English language. It is evident that Malays with an English education are much better off and get better jobs than those with a Malay education. He does not believe that this should be the case.

However, in another part of the story, it seems Usman is not fully ethno-nationalistic as in the scene when the narrator mentions Jid's educational background. Jid who only attended a Malay school finds himself unhappy with his situation. After the Second World War, Jid's fate was similar to that of his friends who were educated in Malay schools. Jid says: "Actually a Malay school is meaningless for me, also for my parents. And I really feel it a great waste that I went to school for many years and obtained useless returns".⁵² Therefore Jid decided to learn English after he realizes that the language is very important for his future life.

The way Usman attempts to reconcile his nationalist fervour with his pragmatism is interesting. In another scene Usman stresses that learning all languages is useful. This can be seen from Kassim's dialogue when he says: "English language and any other languages in this world are truly good if we learn them".⁵³ Nevertheless Kassim goes on

to caution his friend Jid: "But do not go about it blindly and often they themselves - our boys and girls or even you yourself - never learn our own language".⁵⁴

From the discussion it seems that Usman is steadfast and firm on the question of the Malay language as a vehicle of the culture providing a sense of identity. On the other hand, he was also realistic in that he observed that English was the passport to a better life in colonial Malaya and the future. Thus although fervent in his nationalistic views, Usman could not be called a fanatical Malay nationalist or Malay extremist. His approaches were rational and practical.

I believe Usman's perception about the importance of English was greatly influenced by his close relationship with A. Samad Ismail whom he considered as a teacher besides being his chief in *Utusan Melayu*.⁵⁵ A. Samad Ismail was proficient in English because he was educated in English schools.⁵⁶ Thus, as a journalist in *Utusan Melayu*, Usman began to realize the importance of the English language in his career.

iv. Malay Dance

Usman is ambivalent about the position of Malay dance, in particular the Malay '*joget*', in Malay arts and culture. Nevertheless, he comes close to seeing it as an important and integral part of the Malay identity in his concept of '*bangsa Melayu*'. This can be seen in the short story "*Kisah yang Belum Selesai*" (An Unfinished Story)⁵⁷ published in February 1955. This story describes a group of girls from Melaka visiting Singapore. '*Saya*' (the first person narrator) and his friends are responsible for taking them to visit several places in Singapore. On the trip they visit the "ghost house" and a dancing hall and pub. While in the pub, '*saya*' sits on a chair watching his guests dancing, and ponders about the origins of Malay '*joget*' as well as its future.

Regarding the position of the '*joget*', '*saya*' admits that he, along with "many other people say that dance is an art - the art of the Malay race".⁵⁸ But '*saya*' cynically adds "Yes, an art that is bought and sold. But in capitalist countries is it not that every form of the arts is sold and bought?"⁵⁹ Finally '*saya*' declares: "I no longer regard the '*joget*' dance as one of the race's arts. But as a business tool which will not benefit the race".⁶⁰

But for the fact that the '*joget*' had been commercialised and made into a profitable business where young Malay girls were exploited by men in the dance houses, Usman appears prepared to accept the dance form as part of Malay arts. His rejection of it was because it had become a capitalist tool and therefore would only '*merugikan bangsa*'

(bring loss to the race). Thus it is not due to the conviction that the dance form is unMalay that Usman does not advocate its preservation and development but because it has been tainted by its association with capitalistic activities. Nevertheless, one could conjecture that the '*joget*' would have featured favourably in his notion of '*bangsa*' in other circumstances.

B. The Way Forward for *Bangsa Melayu*

Usman realizes there are several weaknesses in the Malays which should be overcome in order for them to face the challenges of a changing environment. To Usman, it all begins with attitudes and minds. Therefore if the Malays are weak in spirit and are narrow minded they will not develop.

i. Rejection of Negative Attitudes

One of the reasons for Malay backwardness compared with the other races, which was put forward in the 1920s and 30s, was that of attitude. According to the Malay writer and teacher, Za'ba, in his articles "The Poverty of the Malays" and "The Salvation of the Malays" Malays seemed to be lacking in perseverance, responsibility, sense of duty, sense of punctuality, industriousness, public spiritedness and love for their country.⁶¹ Usman seems to have agreed with Za'ba for he also sees negative attitudes in the Malays. He depicts these in two of his short stories entitled "*Surat Norliah yang Akhir*" (Norliah's Last Letter)⁶² and "*Peristiwa Bunga Telur*" which were published in 1949.

In "*Surat Norliah yang Akhir*", a story about young love, published on 10 April 1949, Zakaria, the hero, expresses his love for Norliah, the heroine, in a letter. However they are disappointed when Norliah's parents object to their relationship because Zakaria comes from a poor family. Norliah is later forced to marry a person regarded by her as "a youth with a slave's soul" (*seorang pemuda yang berjiwa hamba*) who "does not even bother to involve himself in the development of the '*bangsa*' and homeland"⁶³ and who is lazy. Nevertheless, Zakaria hopes that even if he and Norliah are not to be married she will still support him in his efforts "to go and be of service to '*bangsa*' (race) and '*nusa*' (homeland)".⁶⁴

Thus negative traits in Malays as represented by Norliah's prospective husband are expressed in the phrases '*berjiwa hamba*' (slave's soul), '*tidak mempunyai kerja*' (unemployed), '*tidak tahu bekerja*' (do not know how to work [lazy]), and '*pemuda yang sedikit pun tidak mahu mengambil bahagian untuk kebangkitan bangsa dan tanah air*' (a

youth who does not even bother to involve himself in the development of the race and homeland). The notion that the Malays are mentally enslaved and are therefore not capable of taking a leadership role describes the position of the Malays at that point of time, as Usman saw it. To Usman, Malays had been colonised and will remain colonised unless they change their ways. Thus, to refuse to take part in developing the race is to condemn Malays to servitude.

Redemption for the Malays could only occur if they would emulate Zakaria who is willing to work hard '*Aku akan berkhidmat sepuluh jam malahan mungkin lebih*' (I am willing to work 10 hours or even more). Note that the term used for work is not '*bekerja*' but '*berkhidmat*' which carries the meaning 'giving service' and not just the neutral words 'doing work'. Thus, Malays should be imbued with the desire to give service to their own community. Here Zakaria is shown to be the direct opposite of the other male character in the story who is lazy and refuses to apply himself to work of any kind.

Even though the story addresses the relationship between Zakaria and Norliah, Usman uses the love story to convey a sense of ethno-nationalism. Through the characters in the story, Usman criticizes some Malays like Norliah's prospective husband who is not concerned to develop his own '*bangsa*' and country. He is also a lazy person because he is unemployed and extravagant and likes to waste his parents' money. Norliah describes him as '*kacang hantu*' literally 'ghost-bean', which denotes a lay-about and '*kutu embun*' literally 'dew bug', which denotes a loafer. To Usman, these are among the characteristics of a Malay with a slave mentality. Usman seems to raise the question "how could a Malay race develop if its members are lazy and not concerned to develop their own race?" In other words, Usman's story reflects his view of the realities of society, especially the negative attitudes of the Malays and his hopes that these weaknesses and attitudes could be changed to face the challenge from other races. He draws a contrast between a poor farmer like Zakaria who is willing to work hard, 10 hours or even more a day, and Norliah's prospective husband who is lazy and does not want to work. Usman also wants to show that the poor Malays are willing to work hard unlike the rich who like to waste their time doing nothing. Usman seems to enjoy criticising the rich by making this comparison.

In the story "*Menuju Hidup*", which has been discussed earlier in the context of the development of Malay literature, another theme that Usman presents is negative attitudes. In this story one of the characters is full of self doubt, questioning the reason for his existence as well as the point of carrying on. Usman uses the phrases '*kekecewaan untuk menempuh hidup*' (disappointed to face life), '*menghilangkan kepercayaan pada diri sendiri*' (loss of self confidence) and '*kelemahan diri*' (self weakness) to describe the idea of a '*bangsa*' with negative qualities. To Usman these are

elements that keep the Malays backward. He sees these problems as arising from self weaknesses.

In this story Usman emphasizes '*kemajuan bangsa*' (progress of the race) as a notion to contrast with the negative traits of losing faith in one's ability and lacking confidence. The word '*kemajuan*' is a root word of '*maju*' (progress or go forward) which gives the idea that Usman wants the Malay to progress and not preserve the status quo. This is the positive idea that he wants the Malays to have. In other words, he sees the notion of '*bangsa*' from the development of the race. Therefore in order for the Malay to develop he criticizes those with negative qualities.

When Usman uses the word '*bangsa*' he not only refers to the Malay race but puts forward his concept of '*bangsa*' as being manifested by two opposing qualities. On the one hand, there is the '*bangsa Melayu*' with the positive quality of showing the willingness to work hard. On the other hand, there is the '*bangsa Melayu*' with negative qualities of indifference and laziness. Usman demonstrates his sense of ethno-nationalism when he urges Malays to work hard and get involved in the development of their own '*bangsa*', to work for the '*bangsa*' and overcome the inclination to be lazy and extravagant. This is the notion of '*bangsa*' that he wants the Malays to hold.

In the short story "*Terbitnya Matahari Pagi*" (The Morning Sun Rises)⁶⁵ published on 25 November 1951, the main character, Jaafar, a clerk, criticizes his colleague, Hassan, who is obsessed with his love for Normilah, a clerk in their office and who is threatening to commit suicide because his feelings are not reciprocated. Jaafar advises Hassan not to follow his feelings because indirectly he shows his weakness and cannot think rationally as a youth of the new generation should. He also tells Hassan that if he takes his own life because of his failure in love, "the homeland and '*bangsa*' will lose".⁶⁶ Through Jaafar, Usman stresses "we as the youth of the new generation, cannot be activists or pioneers in the national movement" if we are weak even before facing the real challenge. In this story Usman is also criticizing those Malays who prefer to die because of their failure in love rather than to die in the struggle for the independence of the '*bangsa*' and country. Usman believes that there are Malays who are faint-hearted especially when they fail in courtship. Usman is indirectly posing the question: what would happen if most Malays have this attitude? The fear that the Malay cause will be lost if Malays refuse to change is a constant theme.

Usman uses several phrases such as '*terlalu mengikut perasaan hati*' (to follow too much one's feelings) and '*kesempitan pandangan dan fikiran*' (narrowness of view and mind) to describe his idea of '*bangsa*' with negative qualities. He believes that these elements cause the backwardness of the Malays. In the terms '*perasaan hati*',

'*pandangan*' and '*fikiran*' can be seen the way Usman conceptualised his '*bangsa*'. The heart, senses and mind have to work positively in tandem in order for a Malay to play a useful role in uplifting his '*bangsa*'. Therefore he urges that the Malays with negative qualities should '*meluaskan pandangan dan fikiran*' (to expand the view and mind) so that they can '*menegakkan bangsa*' (to raise the race). The use of the term '*menegakkan*' is significant for it conveys the sense of propping up which implies that the Malays begin from a helpless or not an upright position.

Usman seems to want to arouse the spirit of Malay youths to stand up with determination and not to be easily defeated in the face of a challenge. Thus he uses the word '*meluaskan*' (to expand) the attitude he wants from the Malays and not '*kesempitan*' (narrowness). This brings the idea that to Usman it is shameful if with little reason, especially failure in a love relationship, that a Malay youth wants to commit suicide. Thus Jaafar observes, "I do not understand when in an era of development, an educated youth is willing to die because of his failure in love". When Usman uses the words '*sanggup mati*' (prepared to die) it gives it the tone of accusation as well as bewilderment. Usman also uses the words '*sungguh memalukan*' (very shameful) to describe his reaction to Malay youths who are willing to die for the sake of love. This concept of '*bangsa*' as a Malay race with a narrow view and mind is being criticized by Usman. He hopes Malay youths will think wisely.

From the short stories discussed above, Usman appears more concerned with his own Malay race having negative qualities that should be avoided in order for the Malays to develop and to be respected by other races. His concern about Malay attitudes shows his awareness and his belief that the Malays should act collectively for the good of their race. Usman appears to be an ethno-nationalist in orientation.

ii. Rejection of Social Stratification

Although social stratification can lead to attitudinal problems, the system itself is very often cited by Usman as an impediment to Malay progress. This is because he sees class divisions as a trap for those in the lower division of the class ladder, perpetuating their disadvantaged position. At the opposite end, in the upper echelon of the social divide, people hold privileged positions by virtue of their ascribed status and the fact that they perceive themselves to be better than others. To Usman, this latter group of Malays belong to an old order, are conservative, have outmoded ideas and are impervious to change.

According to Za'ba, a major factor why Malays lag behind other races is their conservatism and their unwillingness to let go of old customs. Usman seems to have agreed with Za'ba's opinions. In Usman's stories young lovers and their parents are often used to highlight the difference between 'old' and 'new' values. One of the old values that Usman attacks is the class divisions in Malay society, that is between the rich and the poor. "*Surat Norliah yang Akhir*", which we discussed above, is also about class divisions. Norliah's father objects to Zakaria's relationship with his daughter, Norliah, because Zakaria comes from a poor family.

Zakaria accepts that he cannot marry Norliah: "I will not be able to guide you or walk together with you in life because the act [existence] of clannishness, class divisions, high and low [levels] continue to be rampant in our society".⁶⁷ Thus there is a sense of resignation here that the values are very strong and pervasive and that it is impossible to fight it. Nevertheless, this does not stop Zakaria from criticizing those who hold such values. He refers to the rich as '*mereka orang-orang yang dipengaruhi keindahan rupa dan kemegahan benda*' (those people who are influenced by beautiful looks and material grandeur). He jeers at like-minded people who '*mengharapkan kekayaan dan darjat*' (hoping for riches and status).

Usman was obviously disappointed that this division still existed in Malay society because it would increase the gap between the rich and the poor. But he was also realistic in that he knew that such values were hard to remove. Social stratification was divisive and it was a situation that should be avoided especially when Malays should be united in order to progress and to gain independence. Nevertheless, through the character Zakaria, Usman urges forbearance and not to lose heart: "But do not be disheartened because a change does not benefit us, because there will come a time when a change will benefit us".⁶⁸ It seems that Usman is reassuring himself as much as he is reassuring other like-minded Malays that conditions will change. Meantime, again through Zakaria, on whom is conferred nobility of character and a sense of duty, Usman urges Malays to: '*pergi berbakti kepada bangsa dan nusa*' (go and be of service to the race and homeland).

This theme of class division and the harm it causes to the Malay race is again seen in the story "*Sepucuk Surat Cinta*" (A Love Letter)⁶⁹ published on 26 March 1950. In this story, '*aku*' expresses his love for his girlfriend in a letter. Unfortunately '*aku*' faces disappointment when his girlfriend's father disapproves of their relationship because '*aku*' comes from a poor family. The girl's father is still conservative minded and fanatically holds on to the old custom whereby parents exercise the right to choose their son-in-law. However, the reason '*aku*' writes the letter is to urge his girlfriend to struggle for the right of the '*bangsa*' and country while at the same time expressing the hope that her father would also do his duty to help his '*bangsa*'. At the end of the letter '*aku*'

expresses the hope that his girlfriend will think carefully about "my fate, your fate, your father's fate, your '*bangsa*'s fate and your homeland's fate".⁷⁰

As in the story, "*Surat Norliah yang Akhir*", Usman, through the characters, we find Zakaria criticizing Malays who are class conscious. In "*Sepucuk Surat Cinta*", '*aku*' criticizes his girlfriend's father. Here the criticism is directed explicitly at the father and is caustic and sarcastic. '*Aku*' says: "You my love, are the offspring of a wealthy man, daughter of a titled person and positioned at the highest level in the list of wealthy people. I know so well that your father is a person with outdated views. He is extremely fanatical about an outmoded custom".⁷¹

Again the notion of holding on to old values is emphasized by Usman through '*aku*'s comments: "Does he not earnestly defend [you] from being married to a person who is poor and who has a new stand such as I? Because he wants to continue his [way of] life".⁷² The difficulty of eroding old values is emphasized again.

In this story Usman goes even further to suggest that the rich and upper class Malay fear change particularly in relation to independence. '*Aku*' puts words in their mouths:

When we achieve independence the wealthy people like him [*Aku*'s girl's father] will live in poverty and suffering. What is the use of freedom when our bodies are completely naked? We do not know how to make plates and bowls [crocery], we do not have a cloth factory, arms factory, there are no intellectuals who are really clever, professors who are very senior, the country has no university.⁷³

Usman is reflecting the views of some Malays who held privileged positions during the colonial period.

Here, the word '*bangsa*' refers to the Malay race as can be seen from the words '*bangsa kita*' (our race) as used by '*aku*'. Again, Usman puts forward the concept of '*bangsa*' as the Malay race with two qualities, that is positive and negative. However, in this story his idea of '*bangsa*' is approached from a different dimension. For instance, he stresses the importance of positive qualities such as willingness to struggle for the fate of the race (*memperjuangi nasib bangsa*), to fight for the rights of the race (*merebut hak bangsa*) and to think carefully about the fate of the race (*fikirkan sedalam-dalamnya nasib bangsa*). Usman uses the words '*nasib bangsa*' and '*hak bangsa*' as two important elements for Malay survival. Usman places the fate of the Malay race in this country in their own hands. He does not give his vision of what he means by the term 'fate' nor does he detail the rights the Malays should have, but he wants his Malay readers to think of their future in terms of their fate and rights in the country. We can see Usman once again expressing his spirit of ethno-nationalism in the words he uses.

Usman's concept of '*bangsa*' rejects negative qualities in Malays. He uses the words '*faham kolot*' (conservative minded) to describe them. Apart from that there are '*bangsa Melayu*', especially the aristocrats, who are proud of their status and do not want Malaya to be independent because they are worried that their traditional feudal status would be lost. These negative attitudes can be seen in the father of '*aku*'s girlfriend. The question Usman is raising through '*aku*' is whether the Malays can develop and the country gain independence if there are people who still have such negative values. Apart from that '*aku*' disapproves of the fact that there are some Malays, especially the aristocrats, who are more concerned with their status than with gaining independence for the country.

It is worth noting that the term '*nasib*', which means either fate, fortune, future or destiny depending on the context in which it is used, is often used by Usman in his short stories. It shows that he is deeply concerned with the question of the future of the Malays. In the words "my fate, your fate, your father's fate, your '*bangsa*'s fate and your homeland's fate", which are the parting words in '*aku*'s letter to his girlfriend, Usman conveys the notion that each Malay's fortunes are tied to the future of his race and his country. Thus, every Malay has the responsibility to ensure that '*bangsa Melayu*' progresses. When Usman talks about the fate of the homeland he is talking about the question of gaining independence.

In this short story, apart from using the phrase '*bangsa dan tanah air*' which appears three times, the author also used the phrase '*bangsa dan ibu pertiwi*'. The term '*tanah air*' means homeland while the term '*ibu pertiwi*' means motherland⁷⁴ which is similar to homeland. Even though both terms have almost similar meanings, the term '*ibu pertiwi*' conjures up an image of love for our own country. This is because of the word '*ibu*' or mother used here. The term '*bangsa*' used here refers to 'race' which can clearly be seen when it relates to the phrase '*untuk kepentingan perjuangan kemerdekaan bangsa dan tanah air*' (for the sake of the struggle for independence of '*bangsa*' and homeland). From this phrase the struggle can be divided into two aspects: '*kemerdekaan bangsa*' and '*kemerdekaan tanah air*'. The phrase '*kemerdekaan bangsa*' I believe to mean struggle for freedom from poverty, illiteracy, orthodox belief and negative traditions faced by the Malays. Therefore, this phrase means to free the Malay race from these mental shackles which bind them. The phrase '*kemerdekaan tanah air*' on the other hand, refers to political independence which means freeing the country from colonial rule.

Usman shows integrity and initiative in his thinking, for instead of criticizing other races or the colonial power for the backwardness of the Malays, he advocates that Malays should change their attitudes. He believes that only then could the Malays compete with other races. For Usman the well being and survival of the Malays was of

paramount importance. The question of the Malay homeland, while important, came second. This can be seen from the expression '*bangsa dan nusa*' in the short story mentioned above. In this story, for instance, through Zakaria, Usman hopes the Malays will devote themselves to activities related to the progress of the '*bangsa*' and homeland rather than thinking of their disappointment in a love relationship. In the phrase '*kepada bangsa dan nusa*', the term '*nusa*' means island or homeland while the word '*Nusantara*' from the term '*nusa*' means Malay archipelago.⁷⁵

The phrase '*bangsa dan nusa*' used in this short story was also used several times by the radical nationalist Dr. Burhanuddin in his book *Perjuangan Kita*, such as when he spoke about '*kemerdekaan bangsa dan nusa*' (independence of '*bangsa*' and homeland)⁷⁶ and '*keselamatan bangsa dan nusa*' (security of '*bangsa*' and homeland).⁷⁷ Even in one of API's objectives the phrase '*bangsa dan nusa*' is used. It is significant that Usman's use of the phrase differs from general usage. People normally use the phrase '*nusa dan bangsa*' and not '*bangsa dan nusa*' as used by Usman. For instance, Ibrahim Yaacob used the phrase '*nusa dan bangsa*' in his book *Nusa dan Bangsa Melayu*.⁷⁸ To Usman, the possible reason for this is that the struggle for the '*bangsa*' should be given more priority than the struggle for '*nusa*', homeland. It seems Usman is more an ethno-nationalist than a nationalist. Usman was obviously a strong admirer of both leaders, Dr. Burhanuddin and Ahmad Boestamam. The term '*nusa*' used by Dr. Burhanuddin and Ahmad Boestamam refers to 'homeland', that is Malaya, especially when they relate to PKMM and API's struggle to achieve independence for Malaya. Usman uses the term '*nusa*' to refer to 'homeland' as well.

iii. Education

Usman believes that some of the negative qualities seen in Malays are due to their being illiterate. Therefore, for the Malays to develop, they should be encouraged to receive education. Through some of Usman's short stories, he addresses his concern for the future of the Malays seeing education as an important key to their future survival.

The issue of the journal *Pelita Malaya* for 8 April 1946, states that about 13,000 Malay children were not attending school and were illiterate. It further concluded that this was one of the causes of the backwardness of Malays compared to other races in the country.⁷⁹ Usman could have been influenced by these reports, as well as the fact that one of the PKMM's programs was to increase awareness about education. His awareness of the backwardness of the Malays in education was depicted in the short story entitled "*Cinta di Negara Hang Tuah*" (Love in the Land of Hang Tuah)⁸⁰ which was published

on 12 February 1950. Education for Malays was a topic of concern and public debate in the early 1950s and Usman picks it up and develops it in this short story.

Set in Melaka, the story "*Cinta di Negara Hang Tuah*" also addresses Usman's zeal for Malay nationalism which will be discussed below. He expresses it through a letter by Hamidah, a character in the story, to '*aku*', the protagonist. '*Aku*' works with Hamidah's father while Hamidah is a school teacher. '*Aku*' falls in love with her and sends her a love letter, to which Hamidah replies with a disappointing rejection. In her letter however, Hamidah states her reluctance to accept '*aku*'s affection because: "The children of our '*bangsa*' whom I am teaching now, are very thirsty for complete guidance and education".⁸¹ She feels that she would be committing a sin to her '*bangsa*' and homeland if she ignores her responsibility to educate her own '*bangsa*'. In conjunction with her aspiration to nurture strong youths for the '*bangsa*', she hopes that : "All young Malay men and women (*pemuda pemudi bangsa Melayu*) should for the time being stem the tide of their love".⁸² Hamidah's letter stirs nationalistic awareness in '*aku*'. In order to concentrate their thoughts on the Malay nationalist struggle, '*aku*' agrees to what she has said: "A youth should feel responsible towards achieving independence for his '*bangsa*' and homeland".⁸³ At the end of the letter, Hamidah invites '*aku*' to make a promise "over the ruins of the Melaka fort, we build a spirit of independence". This appears to be a clear duplication of Usman's earlier phrases based on Dr. Burhanuddin's speech which have been discussed earlier.

In this story, Usman uses the phrase '*sangatlah dahaga kepada asuhan dan didikan*' (very thirsty for guidance and education) to describe the fact that Malays are really in need of guidance and education. Here, Usman stresses the phrase '*mendidik mereka itu supaya berguna*' (to educate them to be useful). Thus education is seen as a guiding process for Malays and that once a Malay is educated he will be useful. The word '*berguna*' is the key to the role of education in Malay society as Usman saw it. Education was not merely for self improvement for in the context of the survival of the Malays it was to make Malays useful to the '*bangsa*'. This can be seen in Hamidah's dialogue: "...educate them so that they will be useful for the development of the '*bangsa*' and country in the future".⁸⁴

Again Usman stresses "duty" not only in Malays who receive the education but also in Malays who can impart that education. This can be seen from the phrase uttered by Hamidah in the story: "There are many more responsibilities and ambitious desires that I must fulfill. The children of our race whom I am teaching now are very thirsty for complete guidance and education".⁸⁵ Here Usman praises the determination shown by Hamidah to educate Malays. Indirectly, Usman wishes that there were many more Malays who like Hamidah were willing to sacrifice their time and effort to educate Malay

children. Here, Usman advocates far nobler causes than marriage and the propagation of one's '*bangsa*' that Malays should aim for.

Several dimensions can be seen in this short story in regards to Usman's concept of '*bangsa*'. First, the notion of a '*bangsa*' that is backward, because many Malays are illiterate and do not have a proper education. Secondly, he presents an optimistic scenario where there are dedicated Malays who are determined to educate the Malay race so that they would not lag behind. Although Usman talks elsewhere about '*pemuda harapan bangsa*', he obviously sees that the '*pemudi*' (women youth) can play no less a role in helping the '*bangsa*'. This is the perception of '*bangsa*' that Usman hopes to encourage in the Malay race.

To Usman a '*bangsa*' in which the individuals are more concerned with their own love lives rather than developing their own '*bangsa*' and their country in a collective spirit is one that will not progress. Therefore, what could be said here is that apart from depicting his spirit towards ethno-nationalism and his concern about the backwardness of the Malays in terms of education, Usman wants to voice the idea that Malays should feel ashamed and draw inspiration from individuals like Hamidah, who are dedicated and show concern about the backwardness of Malay children in education and who take the initiative to develop them. Apart from that, this story reminds Malay parents about the importance of education.

Usman does not seem to blame the government or the leaders for the backwardness of the Malays in education but he seems to blame those Malays who have not taken any initiative to teach and educate their children. Although he does not explicitly say it, the story above implores Malays to take up more worthwhile and noble causes instead of wasting their time in self indulgence and the pursuit of trivialities. It is not that he thinks lightly about affairs of the heart, for many of his stories are about romantic love. However, Usman appears to want to put across the idea to Malays that there is a greater love that they can show and give and that is to their '*bangsa*' and country.

iv. Malay Youth as the Hope of the *Bangsa*

In many of Usman's short stories an often repeated phrase is '*pemuda harapan bangsa*'. Usman appears to believe strongly in the idea that upon the shoulders of the youths rest the future of the '*bangsa Melayu*'. This is probably because of his lack of confidence in the willingness of the older generations to lead in any effort to change the status quo as much as his hope that in the young Malays he would find the dynamism and the open-mindedness needed to institute change. Moreover, the change that Usman seeks

for his '*bangsa*' is a radical one and radicalism is not the forte of the older generation in any society.

The phrase '*pemuda harapan bangsa*' (a youth is the hope of the '*bangsa*') is repeated three times in the short story "*Peristiwa Bunga Telur*". First, Awang begins his speech with the words: '*Kata orang pemuda ialah harapan bangsa*' (People say that youths are the hope of the race).⁸⁶ Later, after Awang had delivered his speech, his friend, Ahmad, who is sitting beside him congratulates him by saying: '*Syabas kau Awang, pemuda memang harapan bangsa*' (Congratulations Awang, you are a youth who is certainly the hope of the race). Finally, in her letter to Awang, Siti Rohani praises Awang's speech by saying: "I remember your face while [you were] giving a speech as a youth, the hope of the race".⁸⁷ It is clear Usman places much of his hopes in young Malays to lead the charge towards development of their own race. Therefore, in order for Malays to modernize, Malay youths should have positive qualities which in the context of this short story amounted to love for their own arts and culture besides having the capability to deliver speeches and to lead. Here, Usman voices his spirit of ethno-nationalism and seems intent on arousing the spirit of the '*bangsa Melayu*'.

Although Usman does not state it, the notion of obligation and duty is expressed in this story. In fact when Awang admits that he would feel ashamed if he is seen to look down on Malay arts and culture, Usman extends this notion further to include the idea that failure to do so will be seen as disgraceful behaviour. Thus, Malay society expects its youth to work for the betterment of society as a whole.

In the short story "*Terbitnya Matahari Pagi*" which we have discussed earlier, Hassan's suicidal feelings because a girl rejects his love is seen by his colleague, Jaafar, as irrational and a potential waste to the '*bangsa*'. Jaafar tells Hassan that if he takes his own life because of his failure in love, "the homeland and '*bangsa*' will lose"⁸⁸ because a youth should contribute to his '*bangsa*'. Therefore Jaafar hopes Hassan will not only think of himself because as a youth his duty is "to free society from oppression, and liberate the '*bangsa*' from colonialism".⁸⁹ Furthermore, youths have an obligation "to build a society where justice is guaranteed and to gain the sovereignty and independence of the '*bangsa*' and homeland".⁹⁰

Similarly in the short story "*Cinta di Negara Hang Tuah*", Usman shows a deep concern for his own race and at the end of the story he expresses the opinion that "a youth should feel responsible towards achieving independence for his race and homeland".⁹¹ The word '*pemuda*' (youth) used here refers to the Malay youth which could be related to a previous phrase '*sekalian pemuda dan pemudi bangsa Melayu*' (all young Malay men

and women). This shows that Usman places the responsibility for the development of their race on young Malays.

As we have seen in "*Cinta di Negara Hang Tuah*", the same theme is repeated although with a slightly different twist to it. Here a young woman is involved and she looks upon her teaching career as a duty as well as a means of fulfilling her ambitions. This mixture of duty and the pursuit of personal needs and wants is also a constant theme in Usman's short stories. He sees no conflict between the two and in fact seems to encourage it, seeing it to be mutually beneficial and reinforcing one another. This comes through clearly in "*Peristiwa Bunga Telur*" when the attraction between Awang and Siti Rohani confuses their motives. On the one hand, they are both in earnest about the need to promote Malay performing arts, but on the other, in what they say and do, each wants to impress the other. This mix is also seen in the story "*Sepucuk Surat Cinta*" where the hero, who is thwarted in his plans to marry his girlfriend, talks about a higher purpose to their love in that he has expected from their union '*...sokongan tenaga, fikiranmu, dalam meneruskan perjuanganku...*' (...the support of your energy, your thoughts, in carrying on my struggle...). The struggle referred to here is that of attaining independence which he later expressed as '*merebut hak bangsa dan tanah air*' (to grab the right of the race and the homeland). Further, the hero goes on to say that should he die in the struggle, there is no question that his girlfriend should not out of love do anything so meaningless as to kill herself, for if she were to die he would, despite the pain, continue with the struggle.

Usman is convinced that Malay youths have an important role to play in freeing society from oppression and achieving independence for the '*bangsa*' and country. Usman strongly believes that "youths are the hope of the race" (*pemuda harapan bangsa*) because they can change the country. He sees them as activists and pioneers in the national movement (*perjuangan nasional*). As Usman stresses in his article "*Seni Sastra Melayu dan Pendukungnya*" (The Art of Malay Literature and Its Supporters) "the Malay race which is now deciding whether to live or die, develop or be backward, is in need of full and strong energies of the younger generation to become colossal strengths to motivate the race".⁹² The emphasis on the Malay youths was an indirect indictment of the older generation as a group which was too set in its ways, conservative and unadventurous.

v. Involvement in a Movement for the *Bangsa*

Usman believed that some Malays were not interested in getting involved in a national movement for the good of their own '*bangsa*' and country because they did not

care about what was happening around them. Therefore the blame should be put on the Malays as the country was still being colonized by the British. Usman's short story "*Kenalan Baru*" (A New Acquaintance)⁹³ published on 21 October 1951 portrays a new friendship between two young Malays in Singapore, Abu and Halimah. One evening, they watch a film at the cinema. Before the show begins, they have a discussion about the country's nationalist movement. In the discussion Abu mentions that "because many (Malays) exclude themselves from the questions relating to the politics of the homeland, our nationalist movement lags far behind in its development".⁹⁴ From the meeting Abu realizes that Halimah is interested in '*pergerakan nasional tanah air*' (homeland national movement). The next morning they meet Wahab while they are walking by some shops in the city. All of them are members of '*Angkatan 50*' (Generation of the 50s), a writers' group concerned to develop Malay literature which was engaged with society. After three days in Singapore, Abu decides to go back to his village. Before he leaves home, Abu promises that if he falls in love with Halimah, their love will not merely be romantic love but to them in '*Angkatan 50*' their love will translate into involvement in the nationalist movement "for justice, independence and sovereignty of the '*bangsa*' and homeland".⁹⁵

Now, Usman uses the word '*kedaulatan bangsa*' (sovereignty of the race) for the first time to describe his concept of '*bangsa*'. The word '*kedaulatan*' means '*kekuasaan yang tertinggi*' (the highest power). His idea of '*bangsa*' from this story that the Malay should be powerful in the country. Therefore he seems to encourage Malays to be involved in ASAS 50 so that they can develop the Malay spirit of collective identity and togetherness in their struggle, as well as developing Malay literature. Thus he uses the words '*pembaharuan*' (reform), '*perubahan*' (change), '*memperkembangkan*' (to develop), '*memperluaskan*' (to expand) and '*mempertinggikan*' (to increase) the Malay language and literature. These are the words which relate to the words '*kedaulatan bangsa*' because Usman believes that by developing Malay language and literature, it will help to increase the standard of the Malays and will make the Malays powerful. Furthermore, in the story Usman urges the Malays to involve themselves in the '*pergerakan kebangsaan*' (nationalist movement). Thus from the words, we can observe that Usman now looks at the concept of '*bangsa*' from the standpoint of sovereignty in his own country.

At the same time that Usman criticizes Malays who show no interest in participating in a nationalist movement such as ASAS 50 for the good of the '*bangsa*', he draws attention to those who are active in ASAS 50 such as Abu, Wahab and Halimah because of their love for Malay literature. Their participation in the movement is well praised by Usman. Through their involvement in ASAS 50 they could use literature as a tool in the Malay struggle to fight for social justice, independence and sovereignty of the '*bangsa*' and country.

In this short story, Usman first begins to use the term '*kebangsaan*' rather than '*bangsa*'. This might be because freed from the police force he now dared to speak about the spirit of '*kebangsaan*' (nationalism). Furthermore, at *Melayu Raya* he was under the direct influence of Dr. Burhanuddin. In this story, he uses the term '*kebangsaan*' to relate to '*pergerakan kebangsaan tanah air*' (the homeland national movement). However elsewhere in the story, Usman uses the term '*pergerakan nasional*' instead of '*pergerakan kebangsaan*'. Both have similar connotations in relation to a nationalist movement. Here, we can see that Usman begins to relate the term '*bangsa*' with the term '*kebangsaan*' to show his awareness of the need for Malay collectiveness and unity in the spirit of nationalism. Thus, we can say that Usman arouses the spirit of ethno-nationalism through the character Abu, stressing that the reason to involve oneself in the national movement is "for justice, independence and sovereignty of the '*bangsa*' and homeland". Usman's concern for the Malays and his political awareness and nationalist fervour continue to express themselves through the characters in his short stories of this period.

In summing up, the words '*bangsa kita*' which refer to 'our race' are repeatedly used by Usman in his short stories such as "*Peristiwa Bunga Telur*", "*Cinta di Negara Hang Tuah*", "*Sepucuk Surat Cinta*" and "*Menuju Hidup*". In "*Peristiwa Bunga Telur*" in Siti Rohani's letter, she uses the words '*bangsa kita*' where the word '*kita*' refers to herself and Awang, and they are Malays. In "*Cinta di Negara Hang Tuah*" when Hamidah refers to '*anak-anak bangsa kita*' (children of our race) in her letter, she uses the word '*kita*' to refer to herself and '*aku*' as Malays. In "*Sepucuk Surat Cinta*" the words '*bangsa kita*' are used four times by the author. The words '*bangsa kita*' refer to '*aku*' and his girlfriend's race, that is the Malay race. While in "*Menuju Hidup*" the word '*kita*' refers to the three Malay characters: Taib, Majid and Hamid; the members of ASAS 50 discussing how to develop Malay literature.

In the early 1950s, the concept of '*bangsa*' which Usman is representing in his stories is of a Malay race, where he is trying to depict all Malays as one '*bangsa*'. We can see that all the characters in his short stories above are Malays and not even one character is a non-Malay. When mentioning the Malay characters he uses the term '*bangsa*'. He has a concept of what the '*bangsa*' should be. For instance to him an ideal '*bangsa*' is one who is concerned to promote Malay arts and culture, to develop Malay literature, to educate Malay children, struggle for the independence of the '*bangsa*' and country and has a strong character, works hard, is prepared to temporarily forgo the joys of married bliss for a higher and nobler cause and does not get easily disheartened and discouraged.

On the other hand, Usman criticizes members of his '*bangsa*' who have negative qualities such as looking down on their own arts and culture; are more concerned about young love rather than love for their own '*bangsa*' and homeland; are arrogant about their

status; are lazy, extravagant, conservative, and believe in old traditions and oppression of others. He believes all these negative qualities need to be changed in order for the '*bangsa*' to develop. Further, Usman is convinced that "when we say that the '*bangsa Melayu*' are passive, stultified and dead in their lives, then there is a link with the political, economic and social condition of society in Malaya".⁹⁶

These were Usman's views and hopes for the Malays as they developed in the early 1950s. His views and hopes do not stop there. Instead they continue on to criticisms of the Malays and challenging them to higher motivations. He was particularly vocal when he was working as a journalist in *Utusan Melayu*. However it seems his conceptual world of one '*bangsa*' began to change when he realized that for the independence of the country, cooperation between the various races in Malaya was vital so that it would ensure better chances for independence and gain support from the British.

The Concept of *Bangsa* Malaya/Malaysia

Before Malaya gained its independence on 31 August 1957, Dato' Onn bin Jaafar, the first UMNO (United Malays National Organization) President (1946 - 1951), argued that the Malay states could not achieve independence from the British if Malays would not cooperate with the other races such as Indians and Chinese in the country. He persuaded the Malays to open the door to the non-Malays as well, so that UMNO would become a 'Malayan' rather than a 'Malay' Party. However, Dato' Onn's plans were strongly opposed by many members of his party which led him to resign and leave UMNO. When Tunku Abdul Rahman (The First Prime Minister of Malaysia 1951 - 1970) took over the leadership of UMNO, he suggested the idea that UMNO should cooperate with MCA (Malayan Chinese Association) and MIC (Malayan Indian Congress)⁹⁷ in a coalition.

Usman might have been influenced by these ideas on racial unity voiced by Dato' Onn bin Jaafar and Tunku Abdul Rahman. Further, as a member of the writers' group, ASAS 50 he was inspired by one of the aims of ASAS 50, that is to struggle for independence. As a writer who believed that Malay language and literature were important tools for national integration in the struggle for independence, Usman appeared to have set out to use his skills in furtherance of his aim to influence the situation. Thus, he begins to use different races as characters in his short stories to show his spirit towards cooperation. This is radically different from the ethno-nationalism he exhibited earlier which was concerned only with the Malays.

i. Integration of Races

In his short story "*Menonton*" (Viewing)⁹⁸ which was published in November 1952, Usman writes about a group of people from different races who are queuing up to buy tickets to watch a film. While waiting in line, they hear a Malay song which imitates an Arabic tune with pseudo-Arabic lyrics being played on the cinema's speakers. The narrator questions the wisdom of this for he fears the Arab community could take offence to it. Then he recalls that the Malay song entitled "*Ayoyo Sami*" (Hey Sami) had not long before that rankled the Indian community. Some Indians took offence to it as the lyrics could be misconstrued as an insult to them. The narrator notes: "The composer who is not careful in composing his song causes divisions among the '*kaum*' (races)."⁹⁹ Here Usman is criticizing the song writer who embarrasses the Indians and threatens to cause a division between the races in the country. Then the narrator continues by saying, "Haven't the people of Malaya chosen to adopt one single form of '*bangsa*' (*satu rupa bangsa*)?"¹⁰⁰

As mentioned earlier, '*rupa bangsa*' is one of the important concepts in nationalism. Usman seems to be showing sympathy for a Malayan nationalism, that is cooperation among races in Malaya, in contrast to ethno-nationalism for Malays only. In the short story this is evident in the description of characters from different races such as Chinese, Indians, Malays and Arabs. There is now an attempt on Usman's part not merely to tell stories about Malays but also to integrate the other races as well, a much more representative picture of the Malayan population landscape. Apart from that Usman sets out to show that there is some goodwill among the two races in a scene where a Malay answers a query from a Chinese. Usman is clearly critical of those who humiliate others on the basis of their race. Thus the words '*satu rupa bangsa*' describe Usman's notion of '*bangsa*' as a nation of different races. The word '*satu*' used by Usman shows that he wants unity, cooperation and understanding among the different races in the country in the formation of one '*bangsa*'.

If we pause to examine the etymology of the word '*kaum*' we find that it comes from an Arabic word '*qaum*' which means "fellow tribesmen, kinsfolk, kin, kindred; tribe, race, people, nation".¹⁰¹ In the phrase above, Usman uses the word '*kaum*' to refer to 'race' when he talks about the separation of '*kaum*'. This means it refers to the separation of races in Malaya namely the Indians, Chinese and Malays. While the words '*rupa bangsa*' seem to refer to 'citizenship',¹⁰² we are brought to understand that it is a combination of different races and could be related to the policies of UMNO's leaders on citizenship in which UMNO should have a more liberal policy in order to allow more non-Malays to become citizens.¹⁰³

The phrase '*rupa bangsa*' was used in one of Usman's earlier short stories, "*Surat dari Seorang Mata-mata*" (A Letter from a Policeman)¹⁰⁴ which was written in 1950.¹⁰⁵ However, there the words '*rupa bangsa*' do not refer to 'citizenship'. In this story which portrays the difficult life of policemen, Usman mentions that "every month a large number of them are visited by several '*rupa bangsa*' especially Bengali and Chettiar (money-lenders) to collect interest"¹⁰⁶ because they had borrowed money from these money-lenders. The '*Bengali*' is the Malay term for the people from Bengal. The term '*Chettiar*' refers to Indian money lenders. These two groups are considered to be ethnically different. Therefore the word '*rupa bangsa*' used in the short story "*Surat dari Seorang Mata-mata*" refers to 'ethnicity'.

In the short story "*Menonton*", when the author mentions different races such as the Arabs, Malays, Chinese and Indians, Usman affixes the word '*orang*' or '*seorang*' to the term, such as '*orang Arab*', '*orang India*', '*orang Melayu*' or '*seorang Melayu*' and '*seorang Cina*'. This can be seen in the following phrases: '*Tiba-tiba orang Arab itu terjerit*' (Suddenly the Arab screamed), '*telah diprotes oleh orang-orang India*' (were protested by the Indians), '*kata seorang Melayu tatkala menjawab pertanyaan seorang Cina*' (said the Malay person in reply to a question from the Chinese).

What needs to be pointed out here is that, instead of using the words '*bangsa Arab*', '*bangsa India*', '*bangsa Melayu*' or '*seorang bangsa Melayu*' and '*seorang bangsa Cina*', Usman has replaced the term '*bangsa*' with '*orang*' or '*seorang*'. The word '*orang*' means person, human being¹⁰⁷ while '*seorang*' is a classifier meaning 'one person'. This certainly indicates that to Usman the term '*bangsa*', used with reference to 'Malay race', is not applicable in the context of this story.

In another short story, "*Perempuan*" (Woman)¹⁰⁸ published in August 1953 the 'racial' context of '*kaum*' used by the author appears in the following sentence, "...in the same way Dato' Tan Cheng Lock thinks about ways to improve the condition of the Chinese"¹⁰⁹ where the word '*kaum*' is used to refer to the Chinese. In other circumstances however, Usman uses the word '*orang*' in place of '*kaum*'. For instance in the short story "*Mencari Dahan Tempat Bergantung*" (Looking For a Branch to Cling To)¹¹⁰ published in March 1954, we see the term '*orang*' used in the following context: "He hates his son, the same way his Chinese employer hates the triad gangs..."¹¹¹ Now Usman used the words '*orang Tionghua*'. From the above two short stories, Usman seems to vary his usage of the words '*kaum*' and '*orang*' with reference to the Chinese, without any apparent difference in meaning.

Usman's conviction of the need for integration of the races in Malaya has influenced his usage of the term '*bangsa*'. Instead of using '*bangsa*' to refer to the Malay

race which could be found in previous short stories, in the three stories above he uses the term '*kaum*' or '*orang*' in relation to the word '*Melayu*'. It seems that Usman's orientation has shifted somewhat and '*bangsa*' is a term not only to refer to Malays but also to include other races. In this context it is 'nation' that Usman means when he places the various races in Malaya within the all inclusive term '*bangsa*'.

Before he joined *Utusan Melayu*, he tended to use the words '*bangsa kita*' which translate as 'our race' in his short stories. However, in the story "*Kisah Pertama*" instead of using the words '*bangsa kita*', Usman uses the words '*bangsa saya*' (my race). For instance Jid says: "At the time when I was about to sit for the examination to become a teacher (Malay school teacher), people who later claimed themselves to be senior relatives (*saudara tua*) to my '*bangsa*' attacked my country which was (then) not ruled by my own '*bangsa*'."¹¹² The words '*saudara tua*' might refer to the Japanese because during the Second World War, Japan attacked and took over Malaya from the British. Therefore, when Jid says '*bangsa saya*' he refers to his own race, that is Malay. The words '*bangsa kita*' are used in Kassim's dialogue: "By merely reading a book we cannot correct the fate and independence of our '*bangsa*'."¹¹³ The words '*bangsa kita*' are similarly used in the previous short stories to refer to the Malay race. Again, in the latter part of the story he talks about the fate of '*bangsa kita*' in facing poverty and distress such as that experienced by the farmers in the village.

Towards the end of 1954, Usman became totally aware of the importance of cooperation among the races in Malaya in the struggle for independence. Usman believed that nation building was important and suggests that it could be done through the forging of a national culture which includes national dance.

By the mid 1950s Malay nationalism had a new confidence, so that Tunku Abdul Rahman began to foster the bonds of cooperation between UMNO, MCA and MIC at the end of 1954.¹¹⁴ This was also the time of the landmark Afro-Asian Conference held at Bandung on 18-24 April 1955. Twenty-nine Asian and African states participated in that historic conference.¹¹⁵ It was considered an historic conference because it was the first time many leaders from Asian and African countries gathered to achieve the aims of the conference. This helped to raise Usman's own consciousness on how different people from different countries could come together in the spirit of friendship.¹¹⁶ The aims of the conference were:¹¹⁷

- (a) Economic Cooperation
- (b) Cultural Cooperation
- (c) Human Rights and Self-determination
- (d) Problems of Dependent Peoples
- (e) Other Problems
- (f) Declaration on the Promotion of World Peace and Cooperation.

At the Malayan Malay Youth Congress held in Kuala Lumpur in April 1955, Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy was given the mandate to represent them at the Afro-Asia Conference in Bandung.¹¹⁸ Besides Dr. Burhanuddin, Abdul Samad Ismail also attended the Afro-Asia Conference and represented *Utusan Melayu* as a journalist.¹¹⁹ Although Usman did not attend this conference,¹²⁰ he was moved enough to pen the following poem, which perhaps best describes his own growing consciousness of the issues involved, "*Khabar dari Asia: Persidangan Afro-Asia*" (News From Asia: The Afro-Asia Conference):¹²¹

Human beings are all equal even if we are of different colours,
Black skinned or white in colour - we are all equal.
We will roar simultaneously against War,
And in a single heartbeat swear to uphold Peace.

These developments and circumstances influenced Usman strongly. He seems to have begun to rethink his ideas on the concept of '*bangsa*'. There is enough evidence to show that he began to shift from the position of using the term '*bangsa*' to indicate 'Malay race' to 'nation' in his short stories. The *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* states that the term 'nation' is either synonymous with a state or its inhabitants, or else it denotes a human group bound together by common solidarity, a group whose members place loyalty to the group as a whole over any conflicting loyalties.¹²² To Usman the term '*bangsa*' refers to a state's inhabitants in Malaya including all the races which are bound together by a common solidarity, whose loyalty was to the group as a whole over any other conflicting loyalties. His concept of '*bangsa*' changed due to the political context in Malaya which was in the process of achieving independence from British colonial rule and also the impact of the Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung. The possibilities for peaceful coexistence for the various races in Malaya were being highlighted. He explores these possibilities in some of the short stories he wrote in the mid 1950s.

ii. Tolerance, Goodwill and Understanding

Usman believes that tolerance, goodwill and understanding among the races are important to the building of a nation. His notion of a nation can be seen in a short story entitled "*Sepintas Lalu di dalam Bas*" (A Glance in the Bus)¹²³ written in 1955.¹²⁴ The story about a journey in a bus seems to give a broader connotation of the passengers belonging to different races going to one destination. Although the story is set in Singapore, the similarities in the racial composition in Singapore and Malaya makes it relevant to our discussion here. Indeed, one could draw the analogy from the bus journey of different races moving towards the same destination, that is, the independence of Malaya.

In the story the narrator describes the passengers who are multi-racial. They are identified by the colour of their skin such as yellow for the Chinese and dark black for the Indians as well as the different languages they use. 'Saya' is a passenger in the bus and describes what he sees during the journey. First of all he sees a smiling man wearing tight trousers (possibly a Malay) who sits very close to a Chinese woman. She seems angry but she has to accept it because the bus is crowded. The narrator clarifies "But what could she say, no one can be angry here".¹²⁵ In another scene a Chinese man advises an Indian passenger not to smoke because there are many people in the bus and the cigarette ash will fall on the others but the Indian just ignores it. These scenes describe the potential for conflict when people of different races co-exist together. It also shows racial tension, for the Chinese lady does not like a Malay male sitting too close to her and when one man objects to another smoking, it is not merely one man telling another not to smoke but a Chinese telling an Indian. But the underlying message Usman appears to be making is that tolerance and understanding are important to avoid disputes.

In the later part of the story, there are friendly conversations between the different races. There is a discussion between a Chinese and a Malay man. Their conversation is about current issues, life in Singapore, the Labour party, several ministers and the Malay village. The friendly conversations can be seen from the dialogues:

Yes, now the Labour party has won. If we are lucky our pay will increase. I say, I did not think that Marshall would win. He holds a minister's post, the Labour Party has a chance.

What about Hamid Jumat?

Good. He is also lucky. The people of Geylang Serai have a chance. The Malay village also needs a permanent land grant...

(Ya, Labour sudah menang sekarang. Nasib baik kita punya pay ada chan naik. I say, itu Marshall tak sangka boleh naik. Dia pegang minister, Labour ada chanlah.)

"What about Hamid Jumat?"

*Bagus. Diapun ada tuah juga. Geylang Serai punya orang ada chanlah. Kampung Melayupun mau grant mati...).*¹²⁶

Usman seems to indicate that any interaction between the different races, even though they have different cultures and skin colour, is important. These friendly conversations and interaction between different races were not being portrayed by Usman in the short stories before 1955. Usman seems to go deep inside the hearts of people of different races and asks for tolerance, understanding and goodwill in people's feelings in building a nation.

His approach to the building of a nation also influences his concept of 'bangsa'. In the story "*Sepintas Lalu di dalam Bas*" the term 'bangsa' is used in the phrase: "The bus in which I was a passenger is crowded with people of different 'bangsa', faces and clothings".¹²⁷ Although Usman uses the word 'bangsa' to mean race here, the words

'*berbagai-bagai bangsa*' shows that he has broadened his vision and that he is also taking into consideration the many different races around him. He no longer treats the subject of the Malays in isolation in the same way that he talks about the '*tanah air*' as though it belongs exclusively to the Malays. Here, the concept of '*bangsa*' he wants to put forward implies the existence of other races and other cultures, religions and customs. Here he begins to integrate and project other races onto his canvas and paints a picture which hints of the spirit of friendliness, cooperation and tolerance among them. This can be seen from several words used by Usman such as '*senyum*' (smiling), '*tak boleh marah-marah*' (cannot be angry) and the friendly conversation of the different races to describe Usman's concept of '*bangsa*'. This is different from the concept of '*bangsa*' in his earlier short stories where '*bangsa*' refers only to the Malay race. However, the concept of '*bangsa*' to mean nation as well as the way to achieve national unity is developed further in Usman's later short stories described below.

iii. National Culture

Malaya achieved its independence in 1957. However, integration among the races in the country was still not seen in society. There was still a strong sense of prejudice and hatred among the races. Thus, Usman realizes that action should be taken by the authorities so that the people of Malaya could live together peacefully. This he depicted in the short story entitled "*Sebuah Coretan*" (A Scribbling)¹²⁸ published in 1958. In this short story Usman uses the term '*bangsa*' to refer to 'nation'. The story portrays a character named Man who attends a Cultural Congress in Melaka. The story begins when Man arrives in Melaka and remembers his past experiences in the city. He recalls that after completing his police training, he and his friends were ordered to fight for the country against the communists. They were fed up with the idea that their duty was to abolish violence and cruelty. Their struggle was "to defend the nation and country".¹²⁹ Then he realized that the struggle "to defend the nation and country"¹³⁰ was in fact to defend the position of the colonial masters. Man's thoughts then wander to the story of the legendary figure Hang Jebat, a Malay warrior, who at one time was considered a traitor.

When Man snaps out of his day-dream, he goes into the Congress hall for the opening ceremony of the Cultural Congress. On the way to the hall, Man meets his old friend, Bakar, who had been with him in the police force. The Congress begins with speeches which interest Man. They express their hope for greater commitment and cooperation from the government in the formation of a national culture to "uplift the standard of our nation."¹³¹ By doing so they are also working towards contributing to a world culture.

There are several words Usman uses to describe his concept of '*bangsa*'. The words '*harapan*' (hoping), '*paduan*' (integrate), '*kerjasama*' (cooperation), '*perpaduan*' (integration) and '*bersatu*' (unity) give an understanding that Usman hopes for integration, cooperation and unity among the races. Thus, this elaborates his idea of what he expects from the '*bangsa*' (nation). The word '*harapan*' describes his hopes for the formation of a nation with the characteristics of '*paduan*', '*kerjasama*', '*perpaduan*' and '*bersatu*'.

In this short story Usman advocates the importance of a national culture for the integration of the races so that the Malayan nation could be uplifted. This is clearly seen when Man comes upon an autograph written by someone he does not remember. By accident, his eyes fall on a passage in the autograph which states: "if in politics we are separated, in culture we are united" (*kalaupun dalam politik kita berpisah, maka dalam kebudayaan kita bersatu*). It seems that from Usman's perception, even though the races in Malaya are separated by different political ideologies, integration can be achieved through a national culture. This is the idea of '*bangsa*' that Usman wants. Therefore the Cultural Congress which Man attended is important as a way of integrating the races.

After the Congress, Man takes Bakar to his room in a hotel. There they have a conversation about their past experiences and their present life. In their conversation Bakar expresses his disappointment because during the congress the participants showed no interest in buying portraits of Tengku (probably Tengku Abdul Rahman) and the King which Bakar is selling. Usman seems to want to show that the participants are not interested in politics but are rather more interested in the formation of a national culture.

In this short story the term '*kebangsaan*' is used as in the sentence "...we hope to form a '*kebudayaan kebangsaan*' ". The term '*kebangsaan*' is linked with the term '*kebudayaan*' to refer to national culture. Here the idea of forming a national culture is proposed by Usman. However, the form that this national culture will take is not made clear by Usman. Was it to be a culture arising out of the merging of the various cultures that have existed side by side in the country or would one of the existing cultures be the dominant element in this national culture? To be sure, most Malays would show a preference for the latter as was seen during the national congress organised in 1971.

The importance of a national culture for integrating the different races in Malaya, had formed part of the national debate in that year leading to the Malaysian government sponsoring a congress to discuss the issue. In the congress, the participants adopted three principles to define national culture which was later adopted by the government as the basis of its own cultural policy. The three principles are:¹³²

1. National culture must be based on the indigenous culture of this region.
2. Suitable elements from other cultures can be accepted as part of the national culture.
3. Islam is an important component in the moulding of the national culture.

Whether Usman held a more open and liberal view than shown by the congress is not clear. If he did, he was far ahead of his times. It should be noted, however, that Usman did not ever in his short stories encourage the idea of Malay political or cultural dominance vis-à-vis the other races. Indeed, he was a believer of the notion of peaceful co-existence. This is clear in his article "*Pengalaman Saya Menulis Sajak*" (My Experiences in Writing Poems) when he stated that the role of a writer is "to struggle for friendship among human beings and races without considering their political ideologies, religion, race and colour of skin".¹³³

Conclusion

From the analysis above, it is clear that Usman used the term '*bangsa*' to refer to 'the Malay race' in his earliest short stories. His concept of '*bangsa*' as a Malay race can be categorized into two qualities which can be derived from the words Usman uses in the stories. First, the positive qualities such as working hard from the words '*akan berkhidmat*'; love for their own arts and culture from the words '*menyokong ... kebangkitan kesenian kita*'; to think and struggle for the fate and rights of the race from the words '*memperjuangi nasib bangsa*', '*merebut hak bangsa*' and '*fikirkan sedalam-dalamnya nasib bangsa*' and a determination to educate Malay children from the words '*kewajiban dan keinginan cita-cita*'.

On the other hand, from several words he uses in his short stories we can perceive Usman's concept of '*bangsa*' as a Malay race with negative qualities. The words are '*berjiwa hamba*', '*tidak mempunyai kerja*', '*tidak tahu bekerja*', '*kacang hantu*', '*kutu embun*', '*merendahkan kesenian bangsa*', '*terlalu mengikut perasaan*' and '*kesempitan pandangan dan fikiran*'. Usman criticizes the negative qualities of some Malays.

In criticizing the negative aspects of Malay society, Usman uses several approaches. For instance, in "*Surat Norliah yang Akhir*" (1949), he uses idioms such as '*kacang hantu*' to denote a lay-about and '*kutu embun*' to denote a loafer. Meanwhile in "*Peristiwa Bunga Telur*" (1949), Usman uses the letter from Siti Rohani to criticize Malays who are not keen to develop Malay arts and culture, whereas in "*Sepucuk Surat Cinta*" (1950), Usman regards Malays as having '*faham kolot*' if they are still conservative minded. Similarly in "*Terbitnya Matahari Pagi*" (1951), Usman directly

criticizes Malays who are willing to die because of failure in a love relationship as possessing '*kesempitan pandangan dan fikiran*' (narrow view and mind). Thus, we can see in Usman's early short stories, that he tends to criticize the negative aspects of the Malay race indirectly. From 1950 onward we observe Usman beginning to be more daring and direct in his criticism.

By portraying characters of negative qualities, he hopes the Malays with negative qualities will be persuaded to change. On the other hand, by portraying characters of positive qualities, he hopes that they will become good models for the Malays.

However, the same term '*bangsa*' was used to refer to 'nation' in the short stories he wrote later. This shift is influenced by several factors. In the first instance, Malay vocabulary is lacking in a suitable term for 'nation', which was a new concept. But more importantly, from the point of view of his political development, it represented a shift in Usman Awang's orientation. Usman was moving away from his ethno-nationalistic outlook, whereby he saw his struggle merely from the standpoint of the Malay '*bangsa*', to a much broader perspective of a Malayan nation which included the other races in the country.

This shift from being a Malay patriot to a Malayan patriot occurred gradually. At the beginning he was more concerned about Malays being backward because of their own weakness. To overcome this problem required a change in Malay negative attitudes and direction. Furthermore he saw that the world was modernizing but the Malays were not changing. However, later, he began to realize that the Malays should not look inward but outward, that is, away from themselves. This, in fact, became the source of inspiration for the concept of nation, in that Malays should cooperate and integrate with the other races in the country to build a nation.

Even though Usman is a patriot, his short stories indicate that he is not a fanatic or an extremist. He does not blame other races or even the colonial power for the backwardness of the Malays. He also talks about the importance of other races in helping to build Malaysia as a nation and the importance of sensitivity and the feelings of other races towards living in harmony.

Usman uses several terms for the concept of homeland such as '*bangsa dan nusa*', '*bangsa dan negara*', '*bangsa dan tanah air*', and '*bangsa dan ibu pertiwi*'. The first term is found in Usman's earliest short story in this analysis, "*Surat Norliah yang Akhir*" (10 April 1949) while the term '*bangsa dan negara*' can be seen in "*Cinta di Negara Hang Tuah*" (12 February 1950). The term '*bangsa dan ibu pertiwi*' can be seen in "*Sepucuk Surat Cinta*" (26 March 1950). However the term '*bangsa dan tanah air*' is

frequently used by Usman and found in “*Sepucuk Surat Cinta*”, “*Kenalan Baru*” (21 October 1951), “*Sebuah Coretan*” (March 1958). In “*Terbitnya Matahari Pagi*” (24 November 1951), apart from using the term '*bangsa dan tanah air*', Usman reverses it to become '*tanah air dan bangsa*'. All these phrases are commonly found in Dr. Baharuddin's book, *Perjuangan Kita*. From the above terms, the point here is that when Usman mentions '*bangsa*' especially in relation to the struggle for independence, he relates it to the homeland that is '*negara*', '*nusa*', '*tanah air*' or '*ibu pertiwi*'. This shows that to him, love for '*bangsa*' is also love for the homeland. Thus, he presents the idea of '*kebangsaan*' (nationalism), as either ethno-nationalism focusing on the Malay '*bangsa*' or nationalism for the nation and country.

Even though there are many terms for country such as '*nusa*', '*tanah air*', '*ibu pertiwi*' and '*negara*' each has a different connotation. For instance, the term '*tanah air*' refers to the country where one is born, and stresses the meaning of one's own land, while the term '*ibu pertiwi*' means motherland. It stresses the term 'mother', the person to whom one should give his love. Therefore, when Usman uses the term '*ibu pertiwi*' he hopes that people will love their country just as they love their own mothers. Love of country has a stronger force when he uses the term '*ibu pertiwi*', rather than when he uses other terms. Be that as it may, whether it is love of '*nusa*', '*tanah air*', '*ibu pertiwi*' or '*negara*' all need a spirit of '*kebangsaan*'.

Usman does not only reflect on the actual condition of the Malays, by either showing their weaknesses or their strengths, but he is also proactive. Apart from showing his concern about the negative qualities of the Malays, through positive role models in the stories, he conveys his ideas and suggestions for change. These ideas include the integration of races in Malaya and the formation of a national culture, which he voices as early as the 1950s. Usman's sensitivity to the racial tension in Malaya is a reflection of his perceptiveness. His solutions for integration are still relevant for Malaysia today.

Usman's concern for integration is not only because of the presence of different races, cultures, religions and customs in the country but also because of a difference in economic background when most of the Malays are still living in poverty compared to the Chinese. Thus, his concern about poverty among the Malays was depicted in several of his short stories which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Endnotes

¹ Virginia Matheson, "Concepts of Malay Ethos in Indigenous Writings", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Volume X Number 2, September 1979, pp. 366-367.

² Virginia Matheson (1979), *ibid.* Quoted from Anthony Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya: Contesting Nationalism and the Expansion of Public Sphere*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 51.

³ Gonda, *Sanskrit*, p. 149. Quoted from *ibid.*

⁴ *Kamus Dewan*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1970, pp. 70-71 states '*bangsa*' means: i) *jenis manusia dari satu asal keturunan*; ii) *kumpulan manusia di dalam satu ikatan ketatanegaraan*; iii) *macam, jenis*; iv) *jantina, jenis kelamin*; v) *darjat tinggi, keturunan mulia*. '*Sebangsa*' means *serupa bangsa, satu bangsa; semacam, sejenis*. '*Berbangsa*' means *termasuk dalam bangsa; dari keturunan orang baik-baik (bangsawan); (Minangkabau) berkerabat*. '*Kebangsaan*' means *yang berkaitan dengan negara secara keseluruhan, nasional; yang dipilih untuk melambangkan keperibadian sesebuah negara seperti bahasa, pakaian; yang dicipta khas untuk dinyanyikan sebagai menyatakan taat setia kepada negara*. '*Bangsawan*' means i) *(orang) berbangsa, keturunan mulia*; ii) *sandiwara dengan nyanyian*. All the above definitions are similar in *Kamus Dewan Edisi Baru*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1989, p. 92 except definition for the word '*kebangsaan*' means i) *yang berkaitan dengan negara secara keseluruhan, nasional*; ii) *yang dipilih untuk melambangkan keperibadian sesebuah negara seperti bahasa, pakaian*; iii) *yang dicipta khas untuk dinyanyikan sebagai menyatakan taat setia kepada negara*.

⁵ *Kamus Dewan* (1970), p. 987 states '*rupa bangsa*' mean *kerakyatan, kewarganegaraan; sifat-sifat (cara hidup dan lain-lain.) bangsa*.

⁶ Abdul Rahman Haji Ismail, "*Takkan Melayu Hilang di Dunia: Suatu Sorotan Tentang Nasionalisme Melayu*" in R. Suntharalingam and Abdul Rahman Haji Ismail, *Nasionalisme: Satu Tinjauan Sejarah*, Petaling Jaya: Penerbit Fajar Bakti, 1985, p. 42.

⁷ Virginia Matheson Hooker, *Writing a New Society: Social Change Through the Novel in Malay*, St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, in press, p. ii.

⁸ Usman Awang, *Tulang-tulang Berserakan*, Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Melayu Baru, 1966, p. 40 - 41. See also Usman Awang, "*Pengalaman Saya dalam tahun-tahun 50-an*" in Dinsman and Sutung Umar Rs (eds.), *Sikap dan Pemikiran Usman Awang*, Petaling Jaya: Penerbit Fajar Bakti, 1983, p. 70 and Ahmad Boestamam, *Carving the Path to the Summit*, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1979, p. 84. In *Tulang-tulang Berserakan* it is stated: "According to received history, we the '*bangsa Melayu*', since the fall of the Malay Empire, must expiate and defend the three, interlinked, inalienable rights of our heritage: *Bangsa*, Homeland and Religion. These three are the main basis of our continuous struggle from beginning to the very end..."

His speech was melodious, high and low, vibrant in the air and then diffused in the hearts of those present, including the young policeman who quietly listened.

'On the ruins of Melaka fort
We build a spirit of independence
Unite all you of Malay descent
Defend the inalienable rights of our heritage'
(*Di atas robohan kota Melaka
Kita bangunkan jiwa merdeka
Bersatu-padulah seluruh baka
Membela hak keadilan pusaka*)

The man ended his speech with a '*pantun*' which was very inspiring to the young policemen, especially Leman. Their young spirits were uplifted, aroused by a strange emotion. They felt close to the people gathered in the hall, felt themselves united with them, there were no barriers".

⁹ Usman Awang, "*Pengalaman Saya dalam Tahun-tahun 50-an*" in Dinsman and Sutung Umar Rs (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 70.

¹⁰ Burhanuddin al-Helmy, *Perjuangan Kita 17 Oktober 1945 - 17 Oktober 1946*, Singapura: Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya, 1946. Quoted from Kamarudin Jaafar, *Dr. Burhanuddin Al-Helmy : Politik Melayu dan Islam*, Kuala Lumpur: Yayasan Anda Sdn. Bhd., 1980, p. 54 stated: '*Parti Kebangsaan Melayu membawa tujuan besar dan suci iaitu menimbulkan kembali nasib bangsa Melayu yang telah tenggelam dan terkandas selama beratus-ratus tahun sudah dengan cogannya - Membela Hak dan Keadilan Putera Melayu dan berserta itu terus menuju cita-cita mulia dan suci iaitu mencapai kemerdekaan bangsa dan tanah air.*'

¹¹ Ariffin Omar, *Bangsa Melayu: Malay Concepts of Democracy and Community 1945-1950*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 38. PKMM's manifesto urged the following:

a) To unite the '*bangsa Melayu*' (Malay race) and to instil a sense of '*kebangsaan*' or nationalism in the hearts of the Malays with the aim of uniting Malaya into one big family, under the concept of *Republik Indonesia Raya* or a Republic of Greater Indonesia.

- b) To strive for freedom of speech, press, assembly and freedom to pursue knowledge.
- c) To raise the economic condition of the '*bangsa Melayu*' through the development of industry, business, and agriculture as well as to raise the standard of living of the '*bangsa Melayu*'.
- d) To strive for freedom of agriculture in the sense that no tax should be imposed on agricultural land and farmers should reserve the freedom to market their products as they like.
- e) To obtain full freedom to establish their '*sekolah kebangsaan*' or national schools where they will receive education in their own language free of charge.
- f) To obtain the freedom to print their own books, to encourage education by democratic means, so as to enhance the position of the '*bangsa Melayu*' in politics, and to promote the feeling of '*kebangsaan*' or nationalism among the Malays.
- g) To work with other '*bangsa*' who live in the country, in order to live in peace, while working towards the establishment of a Malayan United Front, to enable the Malay to be '*Merdeka*' (independent), prosperous, and to live in peace as a part of the *Republik Indonesia Raya* or Republic of Greater Indonesia.

h) To support the movement of the Indonesian '*umat*' or people in the struggle to achieve independence.

¹² *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 1978, p. 87.

¹³ *Pelita Malaya*, 4 March 1946 and Firdaus Haji Abdullah, *op. cit.*, p. 83. For more details of the history of *Pelita Malaya* see also Ahmad Boestamam, 1979, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-57, and the contents in Adnan Mohd. Nawang, "*Pelita Malaya*" in Khoo Kay Kim and Jazamuddin Baharuddin (eds.), *Lembaran Akhbar Melayu*, Kuala Lumpur: Persatuan Sejarah Malaysia, 1980, pp. 133-149.

¹⁴ Kamarudin Jaffar, *op. cit.*, p. 31. See also Ariffin Omar, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

¹⁵ Ariffin Omar, *ibid.*

¹⁶ Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, *op. cit.*, p. 32. He states: "There is no other great '*bangsa*' in this world which has extended culture on a vast scale for the whole race at the same time and pace as the '*bangsa Melayu*'. The '*bangsa Melayu*' has absorbed three cultures one after another, which has fulfilled the character and soul in the descent of the '*bangsa Melayu*', that is, Hindu culture for thousands of years and for a thousand years the soul and blood of the '*bangsa Melayu*' flowed with Buddhist culture. From the eleventh century AD, Islamic culture replaced these two cultures and flourished in splendour and glory with the light of God that is pure in the soul of the '*bangsa Melayu*' as a whole. The '*bangsa Melayu*' is indeed a race that is unique in the world".

¹⁷ Ahmad Boestamam, *Testament Politik API - Merdeka dengan Darah*, Kuala Lumpur: L.T.A.P.I. Malaya, 1946, p. 19. Quoted from Firdaus Haji Abdullah, *op. cit.*, p. 99. It stated that API's objectives were as follows:

- a) To unite all awakened youths under one organization;
- b) To strengthen the fighting front of the '*bangsa*' and the homeland;
- c) To give training in politics - both physical and spiritual - to its youth in order that they may be able to lead whenever required;
- d) To rebuild Malaya in accordance with genuine democratic principles and people's sovereignty;
- e) To obtain the right of representation in the Government of Malaya.

¹⁸ Ahmad Boestamam (1979), *op. cit.*, p. 74.

¹⁹ Dinsman and Sutung Umar Rs (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 23 and also based on the author's interview with Usman Awang at his house No. 4 Jalan 1/33, Kampung Tunku, Petaling Jaya on 31 March 1997.

²⁰ API was founded by Ahmad Boestamam on 17 February 1946 and is a youth wing of the PKMM. This party has a strong spirit towards Malay nationalism. See Ariffin Omar, *op. cit.*, p. 111 and 114.

²¹ Usman Awang, "*Pengalaman Saya dalam tahun-tahun 50-an*" in Dinsman and Sutung Umar Rs (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 71.

²² Based on the author's interview with Usman on 31 March 1997. Also refer to Dinsman dan Sutung Umar Rs (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 23.

²³ *Mingguan Melayu*, 17 February 1952 stated that '*Kepada bangsa Melayu seluruhnya, saya ingin menyerukan, marilah kita berkerjasama, sokong-menyokong dan bantu-membantu. Hidupkan semangat bekerja, semangat berjuang dan tanamkan jiwa kritis pada tiap-tiap diri kita, agar bangsa Melayu menjadi satu bangsa besar yang dinamis dan tidak mati dalam hidupnya.*'

²⁴ *Memoranda*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1962, inside front cover. Quoted from Firdaus Haji Abdullah, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

²⁵ S. Husin Ali, "*ASAS 50 dan Cita-cita Kemasyarakatannya*", *Warisan ASAS 50*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1981, p. 29.

²⁶ Firdaus Haji Abdullah, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

²⁷ Said Zahari, "*Mogok Utusan Kenapa dan Untuk Apa ?*", *Di Sebalik Jendela Utusan*, Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Melayu (Malaysia) Berhad., 1989, p. 31. It stated that '*Utusan Melayu, sejak lahirnya dalam tahun 1939, berikrar akan berkhidmat untuk bangsa, agama dan tanah air. Utusan Melayu telah meniupkan semangat kebangsaan, menanamkan bibit-bibit perjuangan pembebasan daripada belenggu*

penjajahan... Utusan Melayu juga menanamkan rasa benci dan jijik kepada penjajahan, kepada penindasan dan penghinaan ke atas bangsa Melayu.'

28 A. Samad Ismail, "Suara Keramat Membawa Tradisi Baru", *Di Sebalik Jendela Utusan*, Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Melayu (Malaysia) Berhad, 1989, p. 63.

29 Zainuddin Maidin, "Di Sebalik Jendela Utusan", *Di Sebalik Jendela Utusan*, Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Melayu (Malaysia) Berhad, 1989, p. 22.

30 S. Husin Ali, "ASAS 50 dan Cita-Cita Kemsyarakatannya", *Warisan ASAS 50*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1981, p. 23 and 26.

31 Firdaus Haji Abdullah, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 126.

33 *Melayu Raya*, 29 August 1950. See also *ibid.*, p. 125.

34 *Melayu Raya*, 26, 28 and 29 September 1950. See also Firdaus Haji Abdullah, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

35 *Utusan Zaman*, 21 October 1951.

36 *Utusan Zaman*, 25 November 1951.

37 *Mutiara*, Bilangan 39, January 1952, pp. 24 - 26.

38 *Utusan Zaman*, 24 April 1949. An egg flower consists of many coloured boiled eggs which are tied to sticks and normally given to guests at traditional weddings as symbols of fertility.

39 "Peristiwa Bunga Telur", 'bangsa kita yang dulunya merendahkan kesenian bangsanya kini akan insaf dan menyokong dengan segala rupa atas kebangkitan kesenian kita.'

40 "Peristiwa Bunga Telur", 'kami merasa malu dihina oleh masyarakat andainya kami masih merendahkan kesenian bangsa kami'.

41 "Peristiwa Bunga Telur", 'satu-satu bangsa itu tidak akan sempurna majunya andai kata kesenian dan kebudayaannya masih jauh tinggal di belakang'.

42 *Mutiara*, Bilangan 39, January 1952, pp. 24-26.

43 "Menuju Hidup", pp. 25- 26, 'Kalau kita inginkan kemajuan persuratan dan mempercepat kemerdekaan bangsa, kita mesti menggunakan huruf rumi di dalam persuratan kita menggantikan huruf jawi. Sebab dengan cara kita menggunakan huruf rumi itu, bukan sahaja saudara-saudara kita di sebelah Indonesia sama yang akan dapat membacanya, malah dunia internasional akan turut dapat membaca'.

44 "Menuju Hidup", p. 26, 'selama kita tidak mengubah huruf rumi menggantikan huruf jawi, selama itu pula persuratan kita dan kemajuan bangsa kita akan tetap tinggal rendah'.

45 Hendrik M.J. Maier, "A Chew of Sugarcane : Ahmad Kotot's Hikayat Percintaan Kasih Kemudaan" in Zawawi Ibrahim (ed.), *Mediating Identities in a Changing Malaysia*, Reprinted from *Southeast Asian Studies*, Volume 34 Number 3, 1996, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, 1996, p. 81.

46 Asraf and Usman Awang "Memorandum Mengenai Tulisan Rumi untuk Bahasa Melayu" in *Memoranda Angkatan Sasterawan '50*, Petaling Jaya: Penerbit Fajar Bakti, 1987, pp. 14 - 15. It stated : 'Tulisan Rumi dapat menolong memperhubungkan dan malah menyamakan atau menyatukan bahasa Melayu di Malaya dengan bahasa Melayu di Indonesia (bahasa Indonesia) yang Rumi juga ditulisnya. Apabila bahasa Melayu di Malaya dan bahasa Melayu di Indonesia dapat disamakan atau disatukan, maka tukar-menukar fikiran melalui buku, majalah, surat khabar dan lain-lain yang bertulisan Rumi dapat berjalan dengan lebih pesat daripada halnya sekarang ini. Dengan adanya hubungan fikiran antara kedua-dua daerah yang menggunakan bahasa Melayu itu maka pertalian darah serta kebudayaan antara bangsa kita di Malaya dan bangsa-bangsa Melayu lainnya di Indonesia (bangsa Indonesia) akan tetap terpelihara dan terus erat sebagaimana yang menjadi cita-cita kita bersama selama ini.'

47 Usman Awang, "Kesusasteraan ialah Ilmu Pengetahuan yang Dipunyai oleh Seluruh Bangsa", *Mingguan Melayu*, 17 February 1952. See also Dinsman and Sutung Umar Rs (eds.), *Sikap dan Pemikiran Usman Awang*, Petaling Jaya: Penerbit Fajar Bakti, 1983, p. 29.

48 Usman Awang, *Seni Sastera Melayu dan Pendukungnya*, *Utusan Zaman*, 17 August 1952.

49 *Ibid.*

50 *Memoranda Angkatan Sasterawan '50*, Petaling Jaya: Penerbit Fajar Bakti, 1987, p. 27.

51 *Mastika*, July 1954, pp. 38 - 40.

52 "Kisah Pertama", p. 39, 'Sesungguhnya sekolah Melayu ini tak bererti apa-apa buat saya, juga buat ayah dan bonda saya. Dan terasa sesia benar saya bersekolah bertahun-tahun itu dengan hasil yang tak berguna.'

53 "Kisah Pertama", p. 40, 'Bahasa Inggeris dan bahasa apa saja dalam dunia ini bagus benarlah kalau kita pelajari'.

54 "Kisah Pertama", p. 40, 'Tetapi jangan melulu saja dan tak jarang mereka sendiri - pemuda pemudi kita itu atau kau jua - tak pernah belajar bahasa kita sendiri'.

- 55 A. Samad Ismail, *Memoir A. Samad Ismail di Singapura*, Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1993, pp. 189 - 192. See also Usman Awang, "Leader of Malay Literary Movement" in Cheah Boon Kheng (ed.), *A. Samad Ismail: Journalism and Politics*, Kuala Lumpur: Singamal Publishing Bureau (M) Sdn. Bhd., 1987, p. 28
- 56 Based on the author's interview with A. Samad Ismail at his house No. 2 Section 16, Petaling Jaya, Selangor on 29 March 1997. See also A. Samad Ismail, *op. cit.*, pp. 23 - 31.
- 57 *Bintang*, Jilid 27, February 1955, pp. 24 - 27.
- 58 "Kisah yang Belum Selesai", p. 26, 'banyak juga orang-orang menyebut bahawa joget ini adalah satu kesenian - kesenian bangsa Melayu'.
- 59 "Kisah yang Belum Selesai", p. 26, 'Ya, kesenian yang dijualbelikan. Tapi bukannya di negeri-negeri kapitalis ini segala segala kesenian diperjualbelikan?'
- 60 "Kisah yang Belum Selesai", p. 27, 'Saya tidak lagi menganggap tarian joget ini sebagai satu kesenian bangsa. Tetapi sebagai suatu alat perdagangan yang merugikan bangsa'.
- 61 Abdullah Hussain and Khalid Hussain, *Pendita Za'ba dalam Kenangan*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1974, pp. 5-6.
- 62 *Utusan Zaman*, 10 April 1949.
- 63 "Surat Norliah yang Akhir", 'Seorang pemuda yang berjiwa hamba' ... 'Pemuda yang sedikit pun tidak mahu mengambil bahagian untuk kebangkitan bangsa dan tanah air.'
- 64 "Surat Norliah yang Akhir", '...untuk pergi berbakti kepada bangsa dan nusa.'
- 65 *Utusan Zaman*, 25 November 1951.
- 66 "Terbitnya Matahari Pagi", 'Tanah air dan bangsa akan rugi.'
- 67 "Surat Norliah yang Akhir", 'kanda tak akan dapat membimbing adinda atau berjalan bersama di medan hidup kerana perbuatan berkaum dan bergolongan, bertinggi rendah masih bermaharajalela dalam masyarakat kita'.
- 68 "Surat Norliah yang Akhir", 'Tetapi janganlah berputus asa dengan sebab satu perubahan merugikan kita kerana kelak akan datang pula masanya perubahan menguntungkan kita'.
- 69 *Utusan Zaman*, 26 March 1950.
- 70 "Sepucuk Surat Cinta", 'Nasib aku, nasibmu, nasib ayahmu, nasib bangsamu, nasib tanah airmu.'
- 71 "Sepucuk Surat Cinta", 'Kau dinda anak hartawan, anak orang ternama dan duduk di tingkat tertinggi di dalam senarai-senarai hartawan. Aku tahu benar ayahmu itu seorang berfaham kolot. Dia fanatik benar pada adat usangnya'.
- 72 "Sepucuk Surat Cinta", 'Kau dipertahankan benar-benar dari berjodoh dengan orang yang miskin dan orang yang berfaham baru seperti aku ini. Sebab dia hendak meneruskan hidupnya'.
- 73 "Sepucuk Surat Cinta", 'Bila kita mendapat taraf pemerintahan sendiri maka orang-orang kaya hartawan seperti dia akan duduk di dalam kemiskinan dan penderitaan. Apalah gunanya kalau merdeka tetapi tubuh bertelanjang bulat. Kita belum pandai membuat pinggan mangkuk, kita belum ada kilang kain, kilang senjata, belum ada pendita yang pandai-pandai, kita belum ada profesor-profesor yang tinggi-tinggi, negara kita belum ada universiti'.
- 74 *Kamus Dewan*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1970, p. 380, 'ibu pertiwi' is defined as 'negeri tempat tumpah darah (negeri sendiri)'.
- 75 *Ibid.*, p. 776.
- 76 Kamarudin Jaffar, *op. cit.*, p. 31 and 35
- 77 *Ibid.*, p. 41.
- 78 Ibrahim Haji Ya'kob, *Nusa dan Bangsa Melayu*, Djakarta: N.V. Alma'arif, 1951.
- 79 Adnan Mohd. Nawang, "Pelita Malaya" in Khoo Kay Kim and Jazamuddin Baharuddin (eds), *op. cit.*, p. 137.
- 80 *Utusan Zaman*, 12 February 1950.
- 81 "Cinta di Negara Hang Tuah", 'Anak-anak bangsa kita yang kini sedang saya didik sangatlah dahaga kepada asuhan dan didikan yang sepenuhnya.'
- 82 "Cinta di Negara Hang Tuah", 'sekalian pemuda dan pemudi bangsa Melayu seharusnya memberhentikan dahulu arus percintaan.'
- 83 "Cinta di Negara Hang Tuah", 'seorang pemuda mesti mempunyai rasa tanggungjawab terhadap kemerdekaan bangsa dan tanah airnya.'
- 84 "Cinta di Negara Hang Tuah", '...mendidik mereka itu supaya berguna bagi kebangkitan bangsa dan negara di masa hadapan.'
- 85 "Cinta di Negara Hang Tuah", 'Banyak lagi kewajipan dan keinginan cita-cita yang mesti saya lalui. Anak-anak bangsa kita yang kini sedang saya didik sangatlah dahaga kepada asuhan dan didikan yang sepenuhnya'.

- 86 "Peristiwa Bunga Telur", 'Kata orang pemuda ialah harapan bangsa dan kerana itu kami merasa malu dihina oleh masyarakat andainya kami masih merendahkan kesenian bangsa kami.'
- 87 "Peristiwa Bunga Telur", 'teringat wajah saudara memberi ucapan sebagai pemuda harapan bangsa.'
- 88 "Terbitnya Matahari Pagi", 'Tanah air dan bangsa akan rugi.'
- 89 "Terbitnya Matahari Pagi", '...membebaskan masyarakat dari tindasan, memerdekakan bangsa dari jajahan...'
- 90 "Terbitnya Matahari Pagi", 'Susun satu masyarakat yang terjamin keadilannya dan menegakkan bangsa dan tanah air yang berdaulat dan merdeka.'
- 91 "Cinta di Negara Hang Tuah", 'Seorang pemuda mesti mempunyai rasa tanggungjawab terhadap kemerdekaan bangsa dan tanah airnya.'
- 92 Usman Awang, "Seni Sastra Melayu dan Pendukungnya", *Utusan Zaman*, 17 August 1952 states: 'Bangsa Melayu yang sekarang ini sedang membuat perhitungan hidup atau mati, maju atau mundur, adalah menghendaki tenaga yang penuh dan gagah dari angkatan muda untuk menjadi tenaga raksaksa yang menggerakkan bangsa.'
- 93 *Utusan Zaman*, 21 October 1951.
- 94 "Kenalan Baru", 'Kerana banyak yang mengecualikan hal-hal siasah di tanah air kitalah, maka pergerakan kebangsaan kita jauh tercicir dari menapak perkembangan kemajuan.'
- 95 "Kenalan Baru", '...untuk keadilan, kemerdekaan dan kedaulatan bangsa dan tanah air.'
- 96 Usman Awang, "Seni Rakyat dan Angkatan 50" in A.M. Thani (ed.), *Esei Sastra ASAS 50*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1981, p. 183. Quoted from Virginia Matheson Hooker, "Developing a Rhetoric for Malay Society: The Writings of the Generation of the 1950s (ASAS 50)", *op. cit.*, p. 31.
- 97 Cheah Boon Kheng, "Asal Usul dan Asas Nasionalisme Malaya" in R. Suntharalingam and Abdul Rahman Haji Ismail, *Nasionalisme: Satu Tinjauan Sejarah*, Petaling Jaya: Penerbit Fajar Bakti, 1985, pp. 99 -100.
- 98 Mastika, November 1952, pp. 27 - 29.
- 99 "Menonton", p. 28, 'Pengarang lagu itu yang tidak berhati-hati mengubah pantunnya menimbulkan perpecahan antara kaum.'
- 100 "Menonton", p. 28, 'bukankah penduduk Malaya sekarang mau memilih satu rupa bangsa?'
- 101 J. Milton Cowan (ed.), *Hans Wehr: A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1966, p. 800.
- 102 *Kamus Dewan* (1970), p. 987.
- 103 Ishak Tadin, "Dato Onn and Malay Nationalism, 1946-1951", *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, Volume 1 Number 1, March 1960, pp. 74 - 75.
- 104 *Degup Jantung*, Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Melayu Baru, 1963, pp. 48 - 54.
- 105 Refer to Adibah Amin's "Kata Pengantar" in *ibid.*, pp. 3 - 4.
- 106 "Surat dari Seorang Mata-mata", p. 49, '...tiap-tiap bulan kebanyakan mereka didatangi oleh beberapa rupa bangsa terutama Benggali dan Ceti untuk dibayar bunga saja?'
- 107 R.O. Winstedt, *An Unabridged Malay-English Dictionary*, Kuala Lumpur: Marican and Sons (Malaysia) Ltd., 1965, p. 250
- 108 Mastika, August 1953, pp. 26 - 31.
- 109 "Perempuan", p. 27, 'sebagaimana Dato' Tan Cheng Lock berfikir tentang memperbaiki nasib kaum Cina.'
- 110 Mastika, March 1954, pp. 24 - 27.
- 111 "Mencari Dahan Tempat Bergantung", p. 25, 'Dia benci kepada anaknya, seperti majikannya orang Tionghua itu membenci kumpulan haram...'
- 112 "Kisah Pertama", p. 39, 'Waktu saya akan memasuki peperiksaan untuk menjadi guru (guru sekolah Melayu) orang-orang yang kemudiannya mengaku menjadi saudara tua kepada bangsa saya menyerang negeri saya yang tak diperintah oleh bangsa saya sendiri.'
- 113 "Kisah Pertama", p. 40, 'Perbaiki nasib dan kemerdekaan bangsa kita tak akan dapat dari membaca buku sahaja.'
- 114 *UMNO 10 Tahun*, Kuala Lumpur: Ibu Pejabat UMNO, 1956, pp. 89 - 91. Quoted from Firdaus Haji Abdullah, *op. cit.*, p. 146.
- 115 Roeslan Abdulgani, *Bandung Spirit: Moving on the Tide of History*, Indonesia: Badan Penerbit Prapantja, 1964, p. 49.
- 116 Based on the author's interview with Usman Awang on 31 March 1997.
- 117 Roeslan Abdulgani, *op. cit.*, p. 162.
- 118 Kamarudin Jaffar, *op. cit.*, pp. 7 - 8.

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- 119 A. Samad Ismail, *op. cit.*, p. 226.
- 120 Based on the author's interview with Usman Awang on 31 March 1997.
- 121 Usman Awang, *Gelombang*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1961, p. 18. It stated :
*Manusia sama saja meski berapa warna,
Hitam kulit atau putih warna-setara saja.
Serentak teriak memusuhi peperangan,
Sederap ikrar membela perdamaian.*
- 122 David L. Gills (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, USA: The Macmillan Company and The Free Press, 1968, p. 7.
- 123 *Degup Jantung*, Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Melayu Baru, 1963, pp. 70 -74.
- 124 See Adibah Amin's "*Kata Pengantar*" in *Degup Jantung*, Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Melayu Baru, 1963, p. 5.
- 125 "*Sepintas Lalu di dalam Bas*", p. 70, '*Tapi apa nak dikata, tak boleh marah-marah di sini.*'
- 126 "*Sepintas Lalu di dalam Bas*", p. 72.
- 127 "*Sepintas Lalu di dalam Bas*", p. 70, '*Bas yang saya tumpangi itu penuh sesak dengan manusia yang berbagai-bagai bangsa, bermacam-macam rupa dan berjenis-jenis pakaiannya.*'
- 128 *Dewan Bahasa*, Jilid 2 Bilangan 3, March 1958, pp. 154 - 161. •
- 129 "*Sebuah Coretan*", p. 154, '*membela bangsa dan negara.*'
- 130 "*Sebuah Coretan*", p. 155, '*untuk mempertahankan bangsa dan tanah air.*'
- 131 "*Sebuah Coretan*", p. 158, '*mengangkat taraf bangsa kita.*'
- 132 Harold Crouch, *Government and Society in Malaysia*, St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1996, p. 166.
- 133 "*Pengalaman Saya Menulis Sajak*", a talk given by Usman Awang to students of the University of Malaya, Singapore in 1956. His talk was published in Dinsman and Sutung Umar Rs (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 95 - 108. See also Usman Awang and A. Samad Said, *Tema dan Tugas Sastra Melayu Modern*, Kuala Lumpur: Penerbitan Federal Berhad, 1963, p. 32.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CONCEPT OF POVERTY

This chapter will examine Usman Awang's concept of poverty as depicted in a number of his short stories. Usman had personal experience of poverty as a child. Furthermore, most Malays in the 1950s until the 1970s were still poor compared to the other races, especially the Chinese. The analysis of Usman Awang's concept of poverty in this chapter will be organized in six sections. The first section gives a brief account of Usman Awang's personal experiences of poverty. The second section will examine the origins and meaning of several Malay words equivalent or related to the term poverty such as '*miskin*' (poor), '*papa*' (destitute) and '*melarat*' (unstable) which Usman uses in his short stories. The third section explores the concept of poverty from the Malay point of view. The fourth section, which forms the main part of the chapter, provides an analysis of the concept of poverty in Usman's short stories. Finally, the last section will give some findings from the discussion such as Usman's perspective on this concept, the reasons he depicts it in his short stories and the social significance of this concept.

Usman's Personal Experiences of Poverty

Usman grew up in poverty and experienced several tragedies. Due to his difficult life as a fisherman, Usman's father moved his family from Kuala Sedili to Mersing where they stayed with a relative. The first tragedy occurred when Usman's mother fell sick and his father could not afford to send her to a hospital because they were so poor. Their life became even more difficult after Usman's mother passed away¹. On one occasion when Usman's father had not returned home for several days because he had gone into the jungle to plant hill paddy, Usman and his brother, still children, had to find their own food. This incident was evoked in his poem entitled "*Kisah dalam Ribut*" (A Story in a Storm).²

Once a while frightening lightning strikes
In the day a small old hut was wet by the rain
Young brothers came shivering and crying
Where is our father, who till now has not come home ?
(Loving mother has passed away,
Poor father goes far away to plant hill paddy)

In addition, in his daily life, Usman saw people who lived in poverty such as street vendors, labourers, tricyclers, policemen, fishermen, peasants and many others. For instance, while he was a policeman in Melaka, he saw a poor hawker selling his wares on the streets which was against the regulations. Although as a law enforcing agent

it was his duty to arrest the hawker, Usman let him go free for he deeply sympathized with the poor man who was merely trying to earn a living. Such sympathy for the poor is expressed in his novel *Tulang-tulang Berserakan* (Scattered Bones).³

Usman also focuses on poverty in poems such as "*Penjual Pisang di Kaki Lima*" (Sidewalk Banana Seller), "*Pak Utih*" (Father Utih), "*Pak Utih -2*" (Father Utih-2), "*Nelayan*" (Fisherman) and "*Buruh*" (Labourer). As well as in his novel and poems, Usman also expresses the experiences of the poor in several of his short stories, using words such as '*miskin*' or '*kemiskinan*' and '*melarat*'.

Definitions

In the Malay language, the term for poverty is '*kemiskinan*', which comes from the root word '*miskin*'. Etymologically, the word '*miskin*' comes from the Arabic word '*miskin*' meaning poor, miserable; beggar; humble, submissive, servile.⁴ In the Malay dictionary, *Kamus Dewan Edisi Baru* the word '*miskin*' is defined as being without possessions, deficient in everything (necessities), miserable, destitute.⁵ Another Malay word '*papa*' means destitute. The addition of the word '*kedana*' to '*papa*' to become '*papa kedana*' conveys the meaning extremely destitute. With a '*ke...an*' construction it forms '*kepapaan*' which means the state of being destitute.⁶ Another word used to describe poverty is '*melarat*' which means not stable, not looked after.⁷ In his short stories, Usman uses all these words and phrases to describe poverty.

It is clear that the Malay vocabulary contains a range of terms to express various degrees of poverty. For instance, '*papa*' is worse than '*miskin*', and '*papa kedana*' is worse than '*papa*'. However, each word is used in different contexts to give different impressions to the readers. For instance, when someone who is living in an urban area says he is '*miskin*', he means he is poor, in relative terms, compared to someone who is rich. He might not have a car or television at home. But when someone who lives in a rural area says he is '*miskin*', he means he is poor, in absolute terms, for he does not have food to eat. Even the concept of poverty is perceived differently by different people. This is certainly true if one looks at the views of Malay intellectuals such as Za'ba, Ungku A. Aziz, Syed Hussin Ali and Salleh Ismail.

Some Background to the Malay Concept of Poverty

Poverty has long been an issue of concern for observers of Malay society. In *Hikayat Abdullah*, published in 1838, Munshi Abdullah wrote that the cause for the

miserable condition of the Malays under their rulers was the "tyranny and injustice of the government of the rajas, especially towards their own subjects".⁸ Almost a century later, there seemed to have been little improvement as, in writing about the Malays in the 1920s, Za'ba stated:

The Malays, as a whole, are a particularly poor people. Poverty is their most outstanding characteristic and their greatest handicap in the race of progress ... The word 'poverty' as applied to them does not merely mean destitution of wealth or riches. It means terribly more. The poverty of the Malays is an all-round poverty. It envelops them on every side.⁹

Za'ba however, was confident that Malays could overcome their poverty because he writes, "potentially, they possess such qualities as much as do any other people. But the actualised part of this potentiality is still too poor to bear comparison with what we find in other progressive peoples in the country".¹⁰ Thus Za'ba was of the opinion that because the Malays had only used their potential in a very limited way they have not progressed very far and that they did not compare favourable with other more progressive communities.

The tendency to compare the conditions of the Malays with those of the other races, especially the Chinese, reflects the Malay perception of the political and economic realities in Malaya at that time as well as their expectations. Right from the start, the Malays had been recognised by the British as the indigenous population of Malaya. But beginning from the 1930s and especially after the war years, their political position was being increasingly challenged by a non-Malay population that was choosing to stay permanently in the country. To make matters worse, the Malays saw themselves as being disadvantaged vis-à-vis the non-Malays who were getting a greater share of the wealth of the country. Thus it is in the context of this situation that in the 1950s, Ungku A. Aziz, a leading economist of the period, defined poverty in terms of the gap between the distribution of income of the Malays and non-Malays.¹¹ He further noted:

The Malay economy is a rural economy based on agriculture and fishing...Incomes in agriculture and fishing are low. They are especially low in paddy farming. Half of the Malay farmers are paddy farmers whose incomes are around RM\$50.00 per month. The majority of the remainder do not earn more than RM\$100.00 per month.¹²

In 1978 in a study about poverty, Syed Husin Ali, an anthropologist, presented the view that, in a general sense, poverty means a situation where deficiency in getting basic necessities occurs such as food, housing, clothing and social facilities such as electricity, water, hospitals and schools. Syed Husin Ali further observed the state of poverty from two angles, namely that of economic poverty which, in his opinion, occurs either because of no effort or lack of effort due to low income, possession and job and

social standing of the poor for poverty places them in the lower rungs of the social strata.¹³ Although he was talking about poverty in general, his descriptions of its characteristics fitted well with the situation of many Malays.

The conclusion drawn by the above Malay scholars that the Malays were poor is supported as late as the 1980s by a Malay economist, Salleh Ismail who noted in 1983 that the poor in Peninsular Malaysia:

are those who are Malay, the uneducated, the low status job holders, residents of rural areas both in childhood and currently, those who place high dependence on their children and other family members for financial support in old age and who perceive religion as very important in their lives.¹⁴

As we have seen all the Malay scholars mentioned above agree that many Malays were poor but each was inclined to emphasize different reasons for this poverty. Za'ba saw the lack of education of "the right sort" as the main cause of Malay poverty.¹⁵ In his opinion, without education the Malays would be backward and remain so from one generation to the next.¹⁶ Za'ba also held the view that the lack of co-operative organizations was a cause of economic backwardness.¹⁷ He suggested that the Malays co-operate with each other and organize co-operative work to avoid poverty.¹⁸ In proposing the setting up of co-operatives, Za'ba in fact was suggesting that individual effort alone was not enough to overcome Malay poverty and that collective effort was necessary.

It may be noted that Za'ba's perspective on poverty was one which stressed self and collective improvement by the Malays themselves. Ungku Aziz on the other hand, examined the question from the point of view of the pressures placed on the Malays. Thus, in his opinion, there are three main causes for Malay poverty in the villages, namely "low productivity, exploitation and neglect". On the aspect of low productivity this is because of "poor farming techniques and lack of working capital". Further, farmers have been "exploited such as paying heavy rents and other payments charged by the landlords and they also have to pay unscrupulous money-lenders exorbitant rates of interest on debts that never seem to get settled". Apart from that farmers have been "neglected by the government whose budgets are largely spent on urban development such as roads, hospitals and schools".¹⁹

The exploitation faced by rural farmers is also examined by Syed Husin Ali who also related it to the question of landlessness. According to him, in the rural area there are few Malays who are rich and can afford to buy land. The rich sometimes tied the poor farmers down with the debts incurred when borrowing money from the rich. Once they cannot pay their debts they have to sell their lands to the money-lenders. Even when the

farmers were heavily in debt, the prices of paddy or rubber were decided by the money-lenders and borrowers had to sell at lower prices. As a result the poor village people became poorer.²⁰

On the other hand, Salleh Ismail sees the reasons for Malay poverty extending back over a long period. From the pre-colonial era when the Malays governed themselves, he identified the feudal system as the cause for producing values that did not help Malays to modernise. He then placed the blame on the British who through their policy of protecting the Malay way of life, helped to perpetuate such values and insulate them from the social and economic changes occurring within the country.²¹

Salleh Ismail's contention about traditional society had in fact been voiced much more openly and forcefully more than a century earlier by Munshi Abdullah, the father of modern Malay literature. Writing during the pre-colonial period, Munshi Abdullah blamed the Malay rulers for the poverty of the Malays. He drew attention to the cruelty, rapaciousness and arbitrariness of the Malay ruling classes and their tendency to exploit the people and contrasted that with the introduction of laws and regulations by the British and the fairness of British justice.

It could be concluded that because Malay scholars have been drawn to examine the question of poverty among the Malays over a long period of time, the issue was nowhere close to a solution. It is within this context that we have to view Usman Awang's preoccupation with the idea of poverty. It also becomes more understandable in view of the fact that his family was one among many caught in this vicious poverty cycle. This without doubt influenced his thinking and feelings because not only did he know what it was like to be poor but he also experienced several tragedies which were directly related to poverty. It is little wonder that he expresses the experiences of the poor in several of his short stories.

An Analysis of Usman's Short Stories

As noted in Chapter 1, Usman Awang followed the ideology of 'Art for Society' promoted by the ASAS 50 group of writers. In one of his articles entitled "*Kesusasteraan Alat Penting Mengisi Kemerdekaan*" (Literature as an Important Tool to Achieve Independence), he states that as a writer, he should give expression to the voice of people such as labourers, tricyclers, farmers, drivers, fishermen and peasants who perpetually live in distress and poverty.²² This indicates that Usman as a writer feels that he has the responsibility to describe the life of poor people, and that the arts can play a role in changing their lives, so that they become more confident to face the realities of life.²³

Usman Awang believes Malays are poor because they have been oppressed by the Malay upper class and the rich, neglected by the leaders and authorities, and discriminated against by one or other of these groups. He also identifies capitalists as well as the imperialists as sources of poverty in society. He shows, through his short stories, the degradation and humiliation experienced by the poor particularly at the hands of the Malay upper class and the rich. To Usman the poor are normally looked down upon by the upper class, the very group which he believes is largely responsible for their distress.

Usman's short stories essentially describe three dimensions of poverty, namely economic, emotional and class and highlight the causes of that poverty. In the latter regard he lays the blame on the attitudes and actions of various groups within the Malay community as well as outside it. We will be able to understand his concept of poverty from the keywords he uses to describe and explain the phenomenon. Therefore the analysis will be approached from a study of the various faces of poverty, mentioned above, and its causes. The most prominent feature of poverty in Usman's short stories is economic deprivation.

The Faces of Poverty

i. The Economic Dimension of Poverty

Usman Awang's short stories on poverty cover various levels of economic deprivation from the pauperism of beggars at the lowest level, the poor village families without the certainty of a regular income and finally to the economic hardships of people in the urban centres who are on fixed but low salaries such as those in the lower rungs of the public services, police and clerical services. In many instances he describes the material and physical face of poverty in general terms often using the word '*miskin*' and other related words and phrases. However, when he is more specific he represents poverty as a state of not being able to meet basic wants such as adequate food and a decent house.

The earliest of Usman's short stories depicting the issue of poverty is "*Surat Norliah yang Akhir*" (Norliah's Last Letter)²⁴ published on 10 April 1949. In the story which was discussed in Chapter 2 from another perspective, little is said about the life of the poor. Nevertheless, enough hints are given to show that Zakaria, the young hero, is poor. Zakaria is described as '*pemuda tani*' (farmer) and '*pemuda desa*' (villager). That he is obviously poor can be deduced from the fact that he is regarded as not suitable for Norliah who comes from a rich family. His poverty is also indicated from remarks made by Norliah's parent who comments:

What is the use of a village youth who only knows how to hoe in our family which is modern and living in this big city.²⁵

Thus Zakaria is a peasant farmer whose experience is only limited to tilling the soil and whose horizon does not extend beyond the village. Here, Usman's concept of poverty as an economic deprivation which limits opportunities. This captures the multiple implications of economic handicap which in this case also includes the lack of complete freedom to choose a life partner.

This story introduces a new notion of poverty in which the poor-rich divide is made synonymous with village-town dichotomy as seen in the quotation above. Usman describes Norlia's family as '*kaya*' (rich) because they live in a '*bandar besar*' (big city) and lead a modern life. On the other hand, Zakaria lives in a '*desa*' (village) and works as '*tani*' (farming) who only know '*mencangkul*' (hoe). Here, '*desa*', '*tani*' and '*mencangkul*' are words related to traditional village life which, in this story, connote backwardness, while the words '*bandar*' (town) and '*moden*' (modern) are words related to development. In other words, Usman's concept of poverty is based on dwelling place (in a village) and occupation (a peasant). One who lives in the '*desa*' and works as '*tani*' and '*mencangkul*' is regarded as poor. This gives us an idea what '*desa*', '*tani*' and '*mencangkul*' represent to Usman.

"*Surat dari Seorang Mata-mata*" (A Letter from a Policeman)²⁶ which was written in 1950,²⁷ is about Ahmad, a policeman who in a letter to his friend '*aku*' (I) writes about the difficult life of policemen especially that of some of the older men. He describes the meagre pay a policeman receives each month which is barely enough to cover daily expenses. Ahmad sometimes sees some of the old policemen go to the pawnshop to borrow some money using their wife's jewellery as surety. Ahmad singles out Wak Dol as an example of the difficult life of policemen. Despite having worked for more than twenty years Wak Dol has not been promoted to a higher rank. For that reason his pay has not increased much and what he gets is not enough to support his family. Even Mak Jah, his wife, has to help out by selling sweetmeats to bring in additional income.

Despite the fact that his wife supplements his salary, Wak Dol's three children do not have enough food to eat and have to walk a long way to attend school which is quite far from their home. Ahmad, who rents a room next to Wak Dol's house often hears Mariam, Wak Dol's eldest daughter, gently remind her sister not to eat too much because there might not be enough food left for others in the family.

...often I hear Mariam whisper to her younger sibling who has just returned home from school asking her to eat only a little because there is not enough rice, sometimes the spoon scrapes the bottom of the cooking-pot to loosen the rice crust.²⁸

From the words '*sering*' (often) and '*nasi tak cukup*' (not enough rice) the situation in Wak Dol's household is self-evident. The family lives in poverty for Wak Dol cannot even provide the family with rice, the most basic necessity. It is not unknown for the very poor to eat rice with salt or a small piece of salted fish, just sufficient to provide flavour. Thus Wak Dol's family is not extreme in its poverty but comes very close to it. Ahmad expresses his sympathy for the family: '*belas dan kasihan melihat penderitaan mereka*' (sad and sorry to see their suffering) and observes that the family is '*melaratlah dibawa arus penderitaan ke bawah jurang yang dalam*' (destitute borne by the current of distress down into the deep abyss). Usman uses the words '*penderitaan*' (distress or suffering) and '*melarat*' (destitute) to express the hardship experienced by the family. Both terms can describe material as well as emotional suffering so that in these words Usman conveys to his readers the hand to mouth existence of the family.

Wak Dol prays to God that his family might be free from the '*kesempitan hidup*' (tightness of life). The word '*kesempitan*' gives the suggestion of being hemmed in so that coupled with the phrase '*jurang yang dalam*' (deep abyss), they conjure up the image of the family being trapped in the deep hole of poverty. Wak Dol's forbearance or perhaps desperation is seen in the fact that he prays for some relief. However, the narrator questions "whether praying to God is enough to avoid suffering?"²⁹ This comment is significant for Usman reveals himself as a non-believer in fatalism, thus implying here that man must determine his own destiny. This is very much in evidence for elsewhere he advocates that policemen should fight for their rights.

In this story Usman does not use the word ' *miskin*' (poor) or '*kemiskinan*' (poverty) but there are several allusions to it for understanding his notion of poverty. For example, the word '*melarat*' is used to indicate one who is not only very poor (destitute) but also to describe one who is really suffering. In other words, it indicates a more extreme degree of poverty. Instead of using the words '*sangat miskin*' (very poor) Usman uses the word '*melarat*'. That he regards the word '*melarat*' as suitable to describe the difficult life of the policemen is significant. Usman shows that policemen receive a small monthly pay which is not even enough to cover their food bills for a month, let alone pay their past debts. In normal Malay usage, the word '*melarat*' refers to the life of a beggar. Thus when Usman uses the word '*melarat*' to portray the life of the policemen he means to convey the idea that a policeman's life is almost similar to or no better than that of a beggar. Usman therefore uses the word for effect, to shock and to elicit deep sympathy from his readers for the unfortunate policemen.

The use of the words '*melarat*', '*hidup yang sempit*' or '*kesempitan hidup*' is meant to suggest different degrees of intensity of the poverty and suffering of the victims. '*Melarat*' can be regarded as being on the higher scale of poverty, whereas '*hidup yang*

sempit' or *'kesempitan hidup'* is on the lesser scale of poverty and suffering. This means that *'kesempitan'* is not as bad as *'melarat'*. Even though a lower degree of intensity of the suffering is portrayed here through the usage of these words and phrases, all describe hardship and economic distress.

In the short story "*Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua*" (The Fate of an Old Mother)³⁰ published on 7 May 1950, the narrator describes the trials and tribulations of a poor family of two, an old mother, Mak Timah and her son, Osman who are peasants. It shows the distress of an old mother, Mak Timah after her son, Osman is falsely accused and imprisoned. While Osman is in prison, Mak Timah's life becomes more stressful because there is no one from the welfare department to take care of her. Finally she passes away.

This poor family is described as *'hidup di dalam kemiskinan dan serba kurang'* (they live in poverty and insufficiency). Further their life is likened to *'kerakap hidup di batu'* (betel plant growing on a rock). Here the word *'kemiskinan'* is used as well as *'serba kurang'*. The term *'serba'* means 'in every way' so that the words *'serba kurang'* convey the image of being in every way lacking or insufficient. In other words, the family possesses nothing that would constitute comfortable living. Likening their life to that of the betel plant growing on a rock conveys the barrenness of the existence as well as the struggle involved to keep alive. Just as it is difficult for a plant to live in a barren place, it is difficult for poor people to survive if they have nothing to live on. As they do not have enough food to eat, they will later die of hunger.

Usman uses the metaphorical expression *'kepahitan hidup'* (bitterness of life) to describe Mak Timah's life while her son is away in prison. In the words of Lakoff and Johnson, "a metaphor essentially means understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another".³¹ Instead of using the word *'miskin'*, Usman uses the words *'kepahitan hidup'* to show her acute poverty. Without her son, she has no one to work her paddy field and therefore she has no food to eat. No one from the Social Welfare Department comes to assist her. Being of an advanced age, she is unable to survive by herself. That she needs assistance from the Social Welfare Department shows that she can no longer fend for herself.

In "*Untuk Jadi Isteri Orang Bangsawan*" (To be a Nobleman's Wife)³² published on 17 September 1950, Salmiah receives a letter from her ex-lover *'aku'* (I). At the beginning of his letter, *'aku'* expresses his disappointment that Salmiah intends to marry a noble (*seorang bangsawan*). *'Aku'* is only a clerk who receives less than a hundred ringgit a month. Salmiah is well educated. They have known each other since they were children. However, *'aku's* poverty becomes the barrier to their marriage. When Salmiah

is engaged to a noble man, 'aku' worries that this will affect the poor children who badly need education which a person like Salmiah could provide. This is because 'aku' believes that after Salmiah gets married, she will forget the poor and give more attention to the rich.

'Aku' is described as 'miskin' who '*berpendapatan tak sampai seratus ringgit*' (earns less than a hundred ringgit), and belongs to that group of people who are unfortunate (*golongan yang tidak bernasib baik*). To Usman, a town dweller whose livelihood depends solely on a fixed income of less than a hundred ringgit per month is poor. In this story Usman uses the word '*kesempitan*' again to show economic deprivation and categorises those in similar circumstances as unfortunate people. To Usman, someone who earns less than a hundred ringgit is below the poverty line.

Rural poverty is not only confined to the peasant farmers but also to fishermen who are the subject of "*Laut tak Bertepi*" (A Sea Without a Shore)³³ published on 20 May 1951. This short story tells about the hardship of a fisherman Pak Talib, his wife Khatijah and his son Wahab, who like other fisherman families in the village are very poor. During the monsoon season Pak Talib cannot go fishing because the sea is rough. Many fishermen have died because they brave the huge waves to catch fish for a living. Apart from that if Pak Talib catches fish, all the fish goes to a capitalist because he has borrowed money. The capitalist normally will buy the fish cheaply from Pak Talib. As a result Pak Talib does not have enough money to buy even basic necessities.

The poverty of the fishermen is described as continuous by Usman, through the narrator:

...this life of the fishermen that does not change continues on from childhood (to) adulthood, (to) marriage, having children, grandchildren and (through) the generations.³⁴

Here, in the words '*tak berubah-ubah*' (does not change) and '*turun temurun*' (through the generations) the vicious cycle of poverty is implied. There is no way out of this cycle and the notion of being trapped in poverty through many generations gives a sense of the hopelessness of the situation. Thus Usman conceptualises poverty as a permanent burden bearing down heavily on the shoulders of the poor.

"*Manusia dan Hidup*" (Mankind and Life)³⁵ published on 10 June 1951 is yet another story of poverty among those with fixed low incomes. Jaafar works as a peon in a company in the city but gets little pay each month. He lives in a rented room with his wife. One day the landlord comes and asks Jaafar to find another place to rent. Other tenants are also asked to vacate their rooms.

Usman's pained observation about this state of affairs is expressed through the narrator: "Why is life such as Jaafar's very difficult (*susah benar*) even though they live in their own country?"³⁶ To describe the tough life of Jaafar and his wife, Usman uses the word '*miskin*'. This word is suitable to describe Jaafar's poverty because he is a peon who is earning a small pay. There is another phrase used by Usman to describe Jaafar's life as well as others in similar circumstances: '*si miskin-miskin yang hidup setengah mati*' (poor persons who live half dead). In other words, Usman sees them as barely surviving. Extreme hardship is also indicated in the words '*susah benar*' (really difficult). In this story Usman uses the word '*penderitaan*' again.

When Usman uses the words '*susah benar*' we can grasp his notion of poverty. The word '*susah*' means difficult, hard to get or troubled. It relates to effort or feeling. Someone has to use great effort to achieve something or someone is in pain emotionally. The word '*benar*' means true or real. Thus, when Usman uses the words '*susah benar*', he means that someone is in real difficulty or real trouble. Therefore when Usman relates the word '*hidup*' to the terms '*susah benar*' and relegates the poor to an existence which is half dead, this gives the idea that the life of the poor is really difficult and troubled.

The short story "*Yang Tempang*" (A Lame Person)³⁷ published in October 1954, begins with heavy rainfall and '*aku*' and several people are running looking for shelter. They find themselves under a shelter with two other men. Next to '*aku*' are two men who are friendly with each other. A discussion begins between the two men about the rainy season and then about poor people. One of the men points his finger at a beggar family sitting on a sidewalk not far from them. '*Aku*' at the same time looks at the family consisting of an old couple and a small baby. They are all very thin (*kurus kering*) while the small baby's stomach is bloated and it suffers from a skin disease. He sees many flies around them.

Beggars are by definition poor, so that Usman does not have to use the term '*miskin*' in relation to them. But he elaborates on their physical appearance to show the extent of their poverty. For instance, a phrase about the body of the beggars '*badannya kurus kering*' which means they are very thin is used followed by the phrase: '*kurus kerana tak makan*' which means they are thin because they have not been eating any food. Then the baby is described: '*anaknya itu kerdil, macam tiang sebatang, perut buncit, buncit macam perut ikan buntal*' which means the baby is very tiny, as thin as a pole and his stomach is bloated like the '*ikan buntal*' (fish with a bloated stomach). Again, under-nourishment or near starvation is indicated from the baby's distended stomach and the fact that he is '*kerdil*' (stunted). The word '*kerdil*' means 'dwarf' and implies stunted growth which goes hand in hand with lack of nourishment. Further, the tiny baby suffers from skin disease and that there are many flies around him.

What Usman tries to describe in these phrases is that the beggars are really destitute with no money to buy food and medicine and to send their children to hospital. In Usman's article "*Pengalaman Saya Menulis Sajak*" (My Experiences in Writing Poems) he explains that the word '*kerdil*' he used in the poem "*Ke Makam Bonda*" (To Mother's Grave) symbolises poverty. Similarly, in the short story the word '*kerdil*' is used as a symbol of poverty. Poverty to Usman is being undernourished, close to starvation or even starving as is seen in the distended stomach of the baby. It also manifests itself in skin diseases which suggest poor nourishment, poor personal hygiene and dirty living conditions. Thus, in this story Usman describes the physical manifestations of economic deprivation.

"*Ayah tak Kembali*" (Father is Not Returning Home)³⁸ published in December 1954 is a story about a wife who, with her two children, waits for her husband to return home with food. It is raining heavily and while waiting for his return, they are hungry and cold. There is no food in the hut and they cannot even light the fire to warm their bodies because all the wood is wet. The next morning, some villagers find a dead body tightly clutching a small sack of rice and a few pieces of dried fish on the river bank.

The family is described as '*miskin*'. Their '*kemiskinan*' is demonstrated by the narrator: living in '*kelaparan*' (starvation), '*kedinginan*' (coldness) in a '*pondok*' (hut) with an '*atap rumbia yang tua*' (old roof made of palm leaves) which is leaking. Besides, the family has to sell their valuables to the pawnshop to obtain money to buy some food. Usman uses the words '*kelaparan*' and '*kedinginan*' to describe the suffering faced by the poor. Thus when he uses the words '*pondok*' and '*atap rumbia yang tua*', Usman's concept of poverty is in line with the definition of the word '*miskin*' as seen in the Malay dictionary, *Kamus Dewan Edisi Baru*, that is being deficient in everything (necessities).

There is a sad scene in which one of the small children asks for food. He says: "my stomach is hungry, Mum. I haven't eaten yet".³⁹ But there is no food in the house and the younger children keep crying because they are hungry and cold. The older sister and the mother are hungry too but for them it is not the first time they face starvation. Usman is conveying the fact that for many families starvation is normal. To buy some food the father takes to a pawnshop an old ring he had inherited. In other words he does not have any money to buy food except by selling an old ring.

The family's state of poverty is further shown in the condition of the small hut where during heavy rainfall, water comes in through the leaking roof. As a result the inhabitants get wet as mentioned in the story: "The clothes of the three persons begin to get damp and slowly more water comes in and finally they are soaking wet".⁴⁰ Thus, as we can see, Usman's conceptualisation of poverty here embraces inadequacies in the

basic necessities such as food and housing and denial of basic bodily comforts in the form of hunger, wetness and coldness.

Here again the notion of poverty being an unending cycle is expressed when the narrator suggests that the life of the poor is continuous and will never end. Referring to the daughter in the story, he comments: "Actually Timah is a poor village girl. She inherited her poverty from her father and mother, who inherited it from their parents".⁴¹ Here, Usman uses the words '*desa*', '*miskin*', '*kemiskinan*', '*diwarisi*' (to inherit) and '*mewarisi*' (inherited) together to good effect. Thus is conveyed that village folks are poor and they are doomed to be poor always. Usman also uses the word '*desa*' to demonstrate that the poor lead a traditional life which is associated with backwardness.

In the short story "*Uda dan Dara*" (Uda and Dara)⁴² published in March 1956, Uda and Dara are in love but are not allowed to marry because Uda is poor. Eventually, both the lovers pass away because they are heart-broken. Uda's family's poverty is described in the word '*miskin*' and the fact that they only have '*emas sikit, sawah selebar kanggang kera*' (little gold, paddy field only as wide as a monkey's stride), they own a '*pondok buruk*' (old hut). Sometimes, they have to borrow money from a money-lender in order to survive. In contrast the rich are described as owning '*luas kebun banyak gudang, lebar sawah banyak emas*' (wide farms, a lot of factories, wide paddy fields and a lot of gold). Usman uses the words '*emas*' (gold) and '*sawah*' (paddy field) to establish the contrast between the rich and the poor. He also shows that on the one hand the poor live in huts while on the other the rich own lots of factories.

In the revised version of the short story "*Uda dan Dara*" in *Mekar dan Segar* edited by Asraf published in 1962,⁴³ Usman uses the words '*miskin lara*' (poor and distressed) and not just '*miskin*' to describe Uda's family. This word is used when Dara's mother indirectly mentions that Uda is '*miskin lara*' as he owns only a small plot of paddy land.⁴⁴ The words '*miskin*' and '*miskin lara*' are suitable to describe the difficult life of Uda's family. Here, Usman wants to show different degrees of intensity in the poverty. To be '*miskin lara*' is to be extremely poor as represented by the paddy land whose size is figuratively said to be as big as the stride of a monkey.

In "*Kopral Tua*" (Old Corporal)⁴⁵ published in 1963, Usman again portrays the hardship suffered by policemen. In the story Mat is sitting on a chair drinking a cup of coffee in a shop near a bus station in Johor Bahru when his old friend, Busu, approaches him. They first knew each other when they were in the police force. Their conversation focuses on the life of policemen, especially the problems faced by Busu who is still in the police force. Busu talks about how difficult it is to live on a meagre salary and having to support his family which consists of five children, four of whom are still at school.

Busu is a Corporal in the police force, but only receives a hundred and seventy five ringgit a month. With that amount of money, he has to provide for his children's schooling and for daily expenses. In their conversation, Busu asks Mat: "Do you think I can survive with that amount of pay?"⁴⁶ Again in this story, the narrator uses the expression living tightly (*kehidupan yang sempit*) to describe Busu's situation.⁴⁷ Even though the word 'poverty' is not mentioned, the metaphor '*hidup yang sempit*' serves to indicate a state of poverty. Busu is not able to support his family fully for he does not earn enough to feed and clothe his family and buy books for his children.

It may be noted that in the earliest short story, Usman uses the words '*desa*', '*tani*' and '*mencangkul*' to give his idea of poverty. Then in later short stories, Usman begins to use a variety of words such as '*melarat*', '*sempit*', '*kemiskinan*' or '*miskin*', '*miskin lara*', '*serba kurang*' and '*susah benar*' to understand his notion of poverty. He also uses physical appearance to describe his concept of poverty such as '*kerdil*', '*kurus kering*' and '*perut buncit*' as can be seen in "*Yang Tempang*". However, to Usman, his concept of poverty comes mainly from the words '*miskin*' or '*kemiskinan*', '*melarat*', '*hidup yang sempit*' or '*kesempitan hidup*'. These are the words he uses frequently in most of his short stories.

ii. The Emotional Dimension of Poverty

Usman also portrays poverty as an emotional state of mind in his short stories. The keywords '*miskin*', '*kemiskinan*', '*derita*' and '*penderitaan*' appear in many stories. These words are used frequently because they are general terms which can describe both material poverty and its emotional effects. But where he chooses to dwell on emotional impact he uses other words. The Malay language allows Usman to choose from a wide vocabulary of emotive words as well as sayings. Thus when Usman conceptualises poverty in terms of its emotional impact, he is at his most effective for his vocabulary is extensive and his language is often sharp, expressive, engaging and effective.

In "*Surat Norliah yang Akhir*", Usman describes Zakaria as '*miskin*'. The word '*miskin*' appears in both "*Uda dan Dara*" and "*Ayah tak Kembali*", while '*kemiskinan*' is used in "*Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua*" as well as in "*Ayah tak Kembali*". The words '*miskin*' and '*kemiskinan*' are used by Usman to emphasize that being poor is not merely a state of not having enough money or food or other material things. It is also a state of suffering. The idea of poverty that Usman wants to describe here is that the poor do not only suffer physically or materially but also experience mental anguish. Thus, from the above keywords we can see that Usman conceptualises poverty as an emotional condition.

In "*Surat dari Seorang Mata-mata*" the woeful existence of policemen is described in the word '*penderitaan*'. The word also appears in "*Manusia dan Hidup*". In "*Laut tak Bertepi*" the word '*menderita*' is used. The two terms come from the root word '*derita*' which means suffering. While it can describe a physical state it is normally associated with feelings. It seems obvious that Usman is more concerned here to convey emotional suffering. Therefore when Usman uses the word '*derita*' or '*penderitaan*' together with the words '*melarat*', '*kesempitan hidup*' or '*hidup yang sempit*' in "*Surat dari Seorang Mata-mata*", he wants to show that the policemen are not only destitute but also suffering emotionally. Similarly, in "*Untuk Jadi Isteri Orang Bangsawan*" when the words '*misikin*', '*kesempitan*' and '*melarat*' are used. In "*Kopral Tua*" when the word '*menderita*' and the phrase '*hidup yang sempit*' are used, they are meant to stress the emotional face of poverty as well.

Among the stories in which Usman goes beyond the general terms to describe emotional suffering, "*Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua*" provides a good example of his creativity and literary skills. In the story, after Osman is sentenced to imprisonment for two years, Mak Timah's already poverty stricken life is shown to become even more stressful. She is distressed that her son has been taken away from her. The narrator describes Mak Timah as having a bitter life (*kepahitan hidup*). The word '*kepahitan*' means bitterness but in this context it does not suggest a feeling of animosity but more a sense of resignation at the pain and suffering endured. '*Kepahitan*' also implies unpalatability and unpleasantness. Therefore, Usman uses the word to convey feelings of pain, resignation, unpalatability and unpleasantness as well as the emptiness of Mak Timah's life. Usman Awang thus draws a link between poverty and the bitterness of life.

A further metaphor is used to describe Mak Timah's miserable life. This time Usman chooses the orientational metaphors '*nasibnya terlantar*' (her fate was bedridden). According to Lakoff and Johnson:

Orientational metaphors give a concept a spatial orientation; for example, HAPPY IS UP. The fact that the concept HAPPY is oriented UP leads to English expressions like "I'm feeling *up* today. Drooping posture typically goes along with sadness and depression, erect posture with a positive emotional state.⁴⁸

A more common example is: "I'm feeling a bit *down* today", which can be related to Usman's description of Mak Timah's fate as "bedridden". Being confined permanently to bed indicates she has difficulty in surviving because of her poverty. In other words, she is down and out, beaten in the struggle for survival.

Therefore, from the words '*kepahitan hidup*', '*nasibnya terlantar*' and '*macam kerakap hidup di batu*' which were mentioned earlier, Usman wants to give the idea that

the life of the poor is not sweet and easy. To affect the reader emotionally about Mak Timah's struggle, Usman also uses the words '*derita*' (distress) or '*menderita*' (distressed). For instance, after Osman is sentenced to prison, the narrator describes Mak Timah as being left behind to "swim in an ocean of distress" (*Tinggallah Mak Timah merenangi lautan derita*) and as having "a distressed life" (*hidupnya menderita*). The phrase '*merenangi lautan derita*' conjures up an image of Mak Timah lost and all alone in a vast ocean of sadness and misery. The picture of emotional trauma is made complete when the reader is told that Mak Timah cries almost every day thinking of her misfortune. By using these phrases, Usman wants the reader to sympathize with the suffering faced by a lonely old lady, who has been deprived of her son's attention and care and who has to fend for herself despite being weak and ill.

In "*Manusia dan Hidup*" the words '*susah benar*' are introduced to describe the lives of Jaafar and other poor tenants. In the story "*Laut tak Bertepi*", Usman uses the phrase '*kesusahan hidup*' (difficult life) and introduces the phrases '*kesengsaraan hidup*' (life of misery) and '*terumbang ambing di dalam kesusahan*' (tossed about and adrift in suffering) to add to the notion of the mental suffering and pain endured by the poor fishermen. The phrase '*terumbang ambing di dalam kesusahan*' means that the life of a fisherman is uncertain which again emphasizes the stressful mental existence of not knowing what to expect from day to day. It is an apt metaphor for describing the emotional state of poor fishermen.

In "*Ayah tak Kembali*" Usman also uses the word '*kepedihan*' to describe the condition of the poor family. This term comes from the root word '*pedih*' which means pain that is tortuous rather than sharp or nagging. '*Kepedihan*' is also used to express sadness. Thus, in the context of this short story, the word is used by Usman probably to convey sadness tinged with pain. In other words the family leads a tortuous life because of its poverty.

As a whole, Usman's notion of poverty can be seen from the relationship between the words '*miskin*' or '*kemiskinan*' and '*derita*' or '*menderita*' which are mostly found in his short stories. Thus, Usman regards the poor are emotionally depressed because their life is nothing but suffering.

iii. The Class Dimension of Poverty

Traditional Malay society emphasized a rigid division between the rulers and the ruled. Based on birth, the distinction between them had been accentuated through the years by custom and belief".⁴⁹ Thus, we see that marriage outside their class was

consequently very rare as they considered that there was a natural and proper order in society as expressed in the Malay saying '*enggang sama enggang, pipit sama pipit*' (hornbills with hornbills, sparrows with sparrows, that is, big birds assemble with big birds and small birds with small birds). This feudal system had a strong influence on the upper class group as well as on the rich families when it came to marrying their children, especially their daughters to men from poor families.

This feudalistic class distinction was not only looked upon by Usman as an outdated and unhealthy practice in society but also as an ugly face of poverty. Three short stories, in particular, show the class dimension of poverty to good effect, namely "*Surat Norlia yang Akhir*", "*Untuk Jadi Isteri Orang Bangsawan*" and "*Uda dan Dara*".

"*Surat Norlia yang Akhir*", as we have seen, is about the obstacle Zakaria faces in his efforts to marry Norlia because he comes from a poor family. The story shows the rich - poor or urban - rural divide. In the story, Norlia's family lives in town and therefore sees itself as modern. For this reason also Norlia's parents regard Zakaria as unsuitable for their daughter.

Of what use is a youth who only knows how to hoe in our family which is modern and living in a big town. You have no eyes and no feelings ... looking for a partner in a villager.⁵⁰

The words '*apakah akan gunanya*' (of what use) express the gap between the rich class and the poor class. The poor are seen as not able to fit into the upper classes. In fact, the use of the term 'of what use' suggests the notion that the poor are useless to the rich. Further, the words '*yang hanya tahu mencangkul*' (who only knows how to hoe) emphasizes the uselessness as well as the limitedness of the abilities of the poor as perceived by the rich. Here Usman describes his view of the perception that the rich have of the poor, depicting their arrogance and the way they look down on the latter.

Usman also shows his view of the way the rich look upon those among them who dare to try and cross the class divide. Thus Norlia's parents accuse her of not having eyes and heart (*tidak bermata dan tidak berhati*) when she dares to consider a village boy as a partner. The suggestion that she must be blind to do what she does implies the horror and disbelief with which her actions are viewed. The accusation that she is heartless implies that to break with the tradition and ethos of the rich would bring shame and disgrace on the family. Usman thus exposes the machinations of the upper classes in their efforts to remain exclusive through the words of a character who belongs to the upper class in his story.

However, Usman also criticizes from the perspective of the non-elite through the character, Zakaria, for he is made to scathingly comment that it seems '*masih ada faham peringkat dan bergolong-golongan, bertinggi rendah, berdesa berkota, berkaya dan bermiskin*' (there still remains the belief in hierarchy and class, high and low, rural and urban, rich and poor). Here again Usman emphasizes the social divide and of the determination of the rich to maintain their exclusiveness. There is also the implication that the people who live in towns regard themselves as more superior to those who live in the rural areas who are seen as backward, poor, uneducated and contemptible. In the phrase '*masih ada*' (there still remains), Usman registers his disappointment at and disapproval of class distinctions in society.

Thus in this story Usman shows that Malay society remains class conscious and relates this to his concept of poverty as class distinction. He suggests that this is because of the outdated thinking of society (*fahaman kolot masyarakat*), especially that of the upper class which jealously guards its status and riches. In the story, the victim of this outdated thinking is the daughter who ends up with an unhappy marriage. Usman seems to indicate that a lesson could well be learned here by the rich.

Class distinction in the form of contrasting lifestyles as well as perceptions between the upper class and the lower class is shown in the short story entitled "*Untuk Jadi Isteri Orang Bangsawan*". In this story, the rich (*golongan bangsawan*) is represented by Salmiah who is well educated while the poor is represented by '*aku*' (I, or the first person narrator) who is merely a clerk earning less than a hundred ringgit a month. While the rich '*terbang di angkasa*' (fly in the air) and '*bersayap kesenangan*' (have wings of comfort) the poor '*merayap-rayap saja di bumi*' (creep around on the earth) and experience '*kesempitan hidup*' (tightness of life). Here again the rich-poor, high-low, comfortable-uncomfortable divide as represented by '*bangsawan*' versus clerk, the sky versus the ground and comfort versus tightness is emphasized. In figurative language Usman shows the carefree life of the rich as birds flying high up in the sky on wings of comfort.

Differing lifestyles go hand in hand with differing perceptions. The poor are seen by the rich as '*jijik dan rendah*' (revolting and lowly) and as '*sampah yang menyemakkan masyarakat*' (rubbish that litters society), while the poor look upon the rich as people with high noses (*berhidung tinggi*). '*Berhidung tinggi*' implies that the rich hold their noses high up while looking down disdainfully at the lower classes.

Usman uses the words '*merayap-rayap*' (creep around), '*jijik*' (revolting) and '*sampah*' (rubbish) to describe '*aku*'s lowly position from the perception of the rich people. This can be seen from the phrase "The people of higher status hate and look

down on people like '*aku*' who creep around".⁵¹ '*Aku*' is likened to rubbish that litters society (*sampah yang menyemakkan masyarakat*). The words '*merayap-rayap*' normally are used to describe the life of a wild dog or wild cat. These animals will go from one rubbish bin to another at the back of the street scavenging for food. Thus, Usman presents the idea that the poor are living like wild dogs and cats. As a result, they look '*jijik*' and are regarded as '*sampah*' by the rich. The words '*jijik*' relates to appearance and smell, while '*sampah*' relates to waste or rubbish to be thrown out. Therefore, when Usman uses the words '*jijik*' and '*sampah*', his idea is that the poor are not only regarded as dirty and smelly but also useless to society. This gives a stark description of the lot of the poor. The words he uses are cutting and bitter. Thus from the words used by Usman to describe the rich and the poor, he obviously sees that the rich and the poor are clearly divided. Here, he conceptualised poverty as class distinction.

There is another story that reinforces the class distinction in Malay society. In the short story "*Uda dan Dara*" one who is poor is not eligible to marry someone who is rich. Uda from a poor family represents the lower class while Dara represents the upper class. The comparison made by the narrator between Dara and Uda is drawn from a Malay proverb: "Dara is a hornbill and Uda is a sparrow" (*si Dara enggang, si Uda pipit*). Eventually, both the lovers pass away because they are heart-broken.

In the story, Dara's mother rejects Uda's suit because she regards Dara as a hornbill and Uda as a sparrow. The hornbill is a big bird while the sparrow is not only small but very common. Thus is implied that birds not of the same kind should not mix with one another. Here the rich - poor divide is emphasized in terms of big versus small, exotic versus common with the implication that the gap cannot and should not be bridged. Uda is not suitable for someone like Dara. This is made clear when his proposal is scornfully rejected by Dara's mother:

If Uda really wants to get married, then find a match with someone else who is more suitable.⁵²

On their part, Uda's family has to recognise their disadvantaged position "truly we have only little gold and our paddy field is only as wide as a monkey's stride" (*emas kita memang sikit, sawah kita selebar kelengkang kera*). Here we see Usman including in his concept of poverty the personal as well as the societal perception of the poor. Usman shows how someone who is poor is made to feel extreme humiliation and rejection. This is expressed through Uda's thoughts after his failure to marry Dara: "Uda feels so lowly (*rendahnya diri*), he feels the poverty of his existence".⁵³ The words '*rendahnya diri*' describes the low standing or position of the poor.

Usman again includes in his concept the personal and societal perception when he describes the way Dara's mother pours scorn on Uda when Dara refuses to marry a rich man of her mother's choice. Dara's mother says with arrogance :

You are too much directed by your feelings, child, we are of noble descent, we are well placed, there is not a person in this village who does not respect us, no person is much higher in status. Why are you, child, so blind, (as to) choose a descendant of herdsmen, a village lad with a grain of gold, a paddy field no bigger than a monkey's stride?⁵⁴

Thus the rich are well placed and highly respected which implies that the poor are not. Again the word '*buta*' (blind) is used to show someone who acts against the norm of the rich. Further, the quantity of gold and amount of land owned are again emphasized as a measure of material wealth and status.

In sum, Usman's earliest short story depicts the concept of poverty as class distinction, that is "*Surat Norliah yang Akhir*" (1949) where he uses words such as '*miskin*', '*desa*', '*tani*' and '*mencangkul*'. However in "*Untuk Jadi Isteri Orang Bangsawan*" (1950), he uses words such as '*jijik*', '*sampah*', '*rendah*' and '*merayap-rayap*' to indicate the perceptions of the rich towards the poor. Then in "*Uda dan Dara*" (1956), Usman prefers to use words for material good to describe his concept of poverty as resulting from class distinctions such as: '*emas*', '*sawah*' and '*pondok*' apart from the words '*miskin*'.

The Causes of Poverty

i. The Malay Upper Classes and the Rich

The presence of class distinction in society is regarded by Usman as one of the main causes of poverty. He sees the actions and attitudes of the Malay upper class and the rich as oppressive and considers them as responsible for perpetuating poverty in society. As we have seen earlier, he equates poverty with class distinction and regards the face of poverty to be synonymous with its cause. Thus, upper class actions and attitudes are seen as barriers to progress and the alleviation of poverty.

In "*Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua*", Mak Timah's son, Osman, becomes the '*korban fitnah*' (victim of false accusation) of Orang Kaya Omar after the former refused to work in the latter's paddy field for free on a point of principle as Osman believes that the rich can afford hired help. For this refusal Osman is falsely accused by Orang Kaya Omar of wanting to overthrow the autocracy which the latter supports. As a result, Osman finds himself in jail.

In the story, Orang Kaya Omar represents the upper class. The word '*kaya*' means rich, and "it connotes 'power' as well as 'property'; indeed in some Malay regions, the territorial chiefs were called '*orang kaya*', men who are '*kaya*'."⁵⁵ This indicates he is a wealthy person. Therefore this has "immediate implications for the status system",⁵⁶ as he is an influential person who can easily oppress a poor person like Osman with a false accusation. From the story Usman not only portrays the clash between the rich and the poor but more than that he wants to show how the rich make use of their wealth and status to influence others to oppress the poor. The poor become the victims of the rich. For the rather trivial reason of not helping Orang Kaya Omar, Osman becomes the '*korban*' (victim or sacrifice) and is sentenced to nearly two years in prison. Here, Usman criticizes the rich for making life even more difficult for the poor and expresses his sorrow as well as disgust at their behaviour: "Sad, awesome, terrible, the characters in our society".⁵⁷ The moral of the story is that suffering and misery will always be the lot of the poor as long as the rich do not realise that it is wrong to exploit or discriminate against them.

In the above example, Usman is describing a particular kind of cruelty shown by the rich towards the poor as seen in the action of Orang Kaya Omar towards Osman. Another form of cruelty is shown in the rejection of the poor as suitable partners for children of the rich as seen in "*Surat Norliah yang Akhir*", "*Untuk Jadi Isteri Orang Bangsawan*" and "*Uda dan Dara*". This implies not only the inability of the poor to bridge the gap between the rich-poor divide but also the fact that the rich wish to perpetuate poverty through their attitude. The fact that Norliah's parent emphasizes Zakaria's poverty by representing him as someone who '*hanya tahu mencangkul*' (only knows how to hoe) and Dara's mother in "*Uda dan Dara*" emphasizes Uda's poverty in the words '*anak turunan gembala*' (descendant of herdsman), '*anak desa emas sesaga*' (a village lad with a grain of gold) and '*sawah selebar kelengkang kera*' (paddy field as big as a monkey's stride) shows that the rich accept the state of the poor as a permanent reality and fixture. There is no suggestion here that they (the rich) want to change the situation. It suits them to maintain the status quo.

Usman is critical of this division into classes and the separation it entails. For instance, in "*Surat Norliah yang Akhir*", Usman criticizes Norliah's parents for their class and social prejudices: "there still remains the belief in (the distinction based on) hierarchy and class, high and low, rural and urban, rich and poor" (*masih ada faham peringkat dan bergolong-golongan, bertinggi rendah, berdesa berkota, berkaya dan bermiskin*). In "*Untuk Jadi Isteri Orang Bangsawan*", he reminds society that the poor are also human like the rich (*mereka semua manusia juga seperti orang-orang bangsawan*) and that they have feelings too. Thus the narrator writes: "They know pain, know difficulty and know hunger and (they) possess human characteristics" (*Mereka tau sakit, tau susah dan tau*

lapar dan ada mempunyai sifat-sifat kemanusiaan). Thus Usman rejects behaviour that is discriminatory, prejudiced and arrogant, which is integral to his conceptualisation of poverty in this story. The crippled society (*masyarakat pincang*) exists, according to Usman, because of the arrogance of the rich and because society as a whole continues to give respect to the rich and remains uncritical of their actions. Thus Usman here criticizes the rich by inference and not by a bold assertion that the rich in fact make such derogatory remarks. This is a method of criticism which is often employed by Malays and is called '*sindiran*' (sarcasm).

In "*Uda and Dara*" Usman's criticism is more direct. Through the character, Dara, he upbraids the rich such as Dara's mother who are too concerned with their status and riches and who are only too ready to humiliate the poor:

Mother, you are so big (egoistical), that you think you are right; you are so high (in status), that you become like this, you are so rich, that you feel honourable, more honourable than people who have paddy fields only as wide as a monkey's stride. You do not understand love, you do not weigh feelings well, that you punish us.⁵⁸

By using these dialogues and a tragic ending to the story where two young lives are sacrificed and wasted, Usman criticizes the rich for their arrogance and unbending ways and implicitly rejects the outmoded social values of society. Usman uses the phrases: '*ibu terlalu besar*' (mother, you are too big) and '*ibu terlalu tinggi*' (mother, you are too high) to criticize the rich for being arrogant and egoistical. He stresses that when it comes to the question of love and marriage, there should not be any social gap between the poor and the rich. Usman wants to emphasize that happiness in marriage is not dependent on status and wealth but on love and caring. Thus, we can see Usman uses words and phrases which drive home the discriminatory and contemptuous treatment the poor receive at the hands of the Malay upper class and the rich.

Thus, in looking at poverty as a result of the unthinking or even cruel actions of the Malay upper classes and the rich, Usman puts across the view that Malay society remained stratified and the Malay upper classes and the rich continue to cling to a value system which worked against the poor. In terms of marriage, the poor cannot fulfil their happiness because they cannot cross the bar to marry someone from the rich family. He further paints a picture of the gap, both physical and mental, which separates the rich from the poor - a gap that often manifests itself in the superior air adopted by the Malay upper classes and their unwillingness to treat the poor as equals. The conclusion he draws is that the Malays who are better placed both economically and socially are the oppressors of the poor.

ii. The Government and its Representatives

Usman believes that the poor are not only being oppressed and looked down upon by the Malay upper class and the rich, they also suffer discrimination, injustice and neglect from the government and its agencies. This sector which from Usman's viewpoint is another important source of Malay poverty is brought into focus in several of his short stories depicting the harshness of life endured by policemen (based on his own experience as a policeman between 1947 and 1951), and the poor in general but especially those in the rural sector.

In "*Surat dari Seorang Mata-mata*", Usman criticizes the British Colonial Government which shows no concern for the welfare and life of lower ranking policemen. Instead it rewards those who are in the higher ranks in the Government who are comparatively better off. Thus Wak Dol laments the fact that '*nasib kita tak ada siapa yang hendak membelanya*' (no one wants to fight for fate). In the word '*membela*' (fight and protect) is implied that the authorities duty is to take care of their public servants but in this story they have in fact neglected their duty. To Usman this is a clear example of injustice and neglect. The victims such as Ahmad, Wak Dol and his family including other policemen of the lower ranks are seen by him to be no less important for they have contributed much in terms of guarding the security of the country.

Usman is drawing attention to the problems faced by the poor policemen and hopes they will be taken care of by the authorities. He believes that as long as the welfare of the poor policemen is not given some attention by the authorities, they will continue to live in tragic circumstances. There is an unspoken appeal here to the Government not to forget or ignore the plight of the lower ranking policemen. At the same time Usman expresses his bitterness at the fact that the services and sacrifices made by the ordinary policeman, who endangers his life in the line of duty, is not fully appreciated and rewarded.

In "*Kopral Tua*" Usman also accuses the authorities for not showing concern for the welfare of the policemen in the lower ranks. He weaves into his story the information that newly recruited policemen, who have just completed their training, receive a salary of only a hundred and ten ringgit a month with a six ringgit increment each year. The highest pay they will receive if they remain in the same rank is one hundred and fifty two ringgit a month. The character Busu raises the question: "How can one survive with that amount of pay, if the policeman has ten children?" Apart from that Busu is also unhappy that the authorities have not taken any step to increase their pay. When Mat urges Busu to do something about it the latter bitterly replies: "Who has ever paid any attention to the pay of the ordinary policemen?"⁵⁹ Here the notion of '*membela*' is presented in the words

"paying attention". Usman obviously does not believe that the authorities would behave in an enlightened manner and take care of the welfare of all the government servants without prejudice or favour.

Wak Dol in "*Surat dari Seorang Mata-mata*" expresses his dissatisfaction with the government's failure to increase policemen's salaries by drawing attention to the fact that he and his friends in the lower ranks also play an important role in the country's security, especially during the Communist Emergency. Busu in "*Kopral Tua*", as we have seen, expresses it by asserting that it is impossible for policemen to live on their meagre pay. Thus the main bone is the Government's lack of compassion and justice and its perceived discrimination against low ranking policemen.

In "*Laut tak Bertepi*" the narrator asks: "Why is the fate of the fishermen like me not being given attention?" which echoes the words of Wak Dol in "*Surat dari Seorang Mata-mata*". In this story, Usman points an accusing finger at a body known as "Rida" (Rural Industrial Development Authority) which is responsible for helping the village people, the poor farmers, paddy planters and fishermen by giving financial assistance or teaching new techniques on farming, gardening and fishing but fails to deliver. Even though the important role of "Rida" in helping the village people is often publicly emphasized, unfortunately the work of the body does not extend to the village. The village people do not even know the meaning of the word "Rida" and its role in society. Usman seems critical of "Rida" for its failure to fulfil its responsibility. To him, action should be taken by the authorities to look into the problems faced by fishermen so that they can have a better life and in order to ensure that they are not exploited by unscrupulous elements.

In "*Manusia dan Hidup*", where the problem of the lack of housing is the main theme, the narrator describes how Jaafar, along with other poor tenants, is often at the mercy of rich landlords who can terminate a tenancy at will. In this story is shown Usman's resentment at the fact that the Government does very little to improve the housing problems of the poor Malays. Usman's pained observation about this state of affairs is expressed through the narrator: "Why is life such as Jaafar '*susah benar*' (very difficult) even though they live in their own country?"⁶⁰ This comment is an indirect indictment of the British colonial power and shows Usman's resentment at the fact that the Government did very little to improve the housing problems of the poor Malays.

In the second part of the story "*Manusia dan Hidup*", Usman criticizes the authorities (*pihak yang berkuasa*) whom he sees as not being concerned to solve the problems of the paddy planters such as lack of water supply in their paddy fields, the paddy being eaten by rats and dealing with exploitative paddy buyers. When the paddy

planters complain to the authorities, no action is taken to solve their problem as the narrator's comment: "the villagers' expectations of the authorities are not met at all (*jauh sekali*), and the authorities are even less concerned about their needs (*apalagi untuk ambil tahu*)".⁶¹ Usman uses the words '*jauh sekali*' and '*apalagi untuk ambil tahu*' to describe the irresponsibility of the authorities towards the poor.

Although government neglect forms a minor theme in Usman's short stories about rural poverty, there is little doubt that he sees it as a serious problem and one that needs to be addressed. In the short story "*Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua*", which has been discussed earlier, Mak Timah, whose son is put in prison, finds herself without any support, although a government Welfare Department exists in the country. Usman believes the government has a responsibility to help the poor but it fails to fulfil its responsibility. The poor are left in distress and suffering while the rich are taken care of. Through the narrator in the story, Usman poses the question and indirectly criticizes the Welfare Department: "What is the meaning of the welfare body if it is only concerned (*hanya mementingkan*) with the fate of the rich?"⁶² From the words '*hanya mementingkan*', Usman raises the issue of justice which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Poverty as a consequence of neglect and discrimination on the part of the Government and its representatives is shown by Usman as an endemic problem in the above group of short stories written within the period of British colonial rule. Thus he does appear to lay some of the blame on the colonial regime for the existence of poverty among the Malays, although in the short stories we have discussed he only refers to the 'authorities' and does not use the word "British" at all. To Usman, at the crux of the matter is the unfair treatment shown by the authorities and their representatives towards the poor.

iii. Money-lenders, Middlemen and Landlords

One of the main problems faced by the poor is financial debt. Usman does not use this as a central theme in his stories but weaves it in in order to show an additional consequence of poverty. Thus as we have seen in the story "*Surat dari Seorang Mata-mata*" he refers to indebtedness among policemen of the lower ranks who have to resort to borrowing from money-lenders to make ends meet. Rural indebtedness is shown in the story "*Uda dan Dara*" in which Usman also raises the issue of the problem faced by the poor in getting financial assistance. They have to beg for a loan and are normally asked to pay a high interest and to produce valuable things for security. For instance, when Uda's mother asks for a loan from Tuan Haji Alang her request is rejected because she has not paid off her earlier debt even though she pleads she cannot pay because of a drought.

Even when many poor farmers, who have not paid their debts to Tuan Haji Alang, appeal to him not to seize some of the paddy they own he says: "If all the village people have nothing to eat, why must I feed them? Why must I waste my money because of them?"⁶³ Usman seems to want to show how cruel the rich people are towards the poor. As money-lenders they are exploitative and greedy. But he goes further than that for in the character Tuan Haji Alang he also suggests that a man who is supposed to be pious can also be unfeeling and driven by greed. A religious person like Tuan Haji Alang should not behave immorally because he should have feelings of charity towards the poor.

In "*Manusia dan Hidup*" Usman criticizes the middlemen who are the paddy buyers. In this story, the narrator portrays paddy planters who are often being oppressed by paddy buyers. Munah's father, Pak Man who works as a paddy planter, represents the poor paddy planters in his village. Pak Man sells his paddy at 10.00 ringgit for 60.5 kilograms, but the receipt which he receives states the price as RM\$15.95 at 60.5 kilograms. He is cheated by the buyer. Because Pak Man is not satisfied with what has happened to him and the other paddy planters, he complains about this matter to the authorities. As a result, the buyers take revenge by not buying the paddy from Pak Man and the other paddy planters who made complaints. Eventually, their paddy is left to rot because of the paddy buyers' boycott.

The story describes two groups which cause difficulties in the lives of the paddy planters. Firstly, the paddy buyers who cheat the growers when buying the paddy. These buyers are described as '*lintah darat*' by the narrator. The Malay idiom '*lintah darat*' (a land leech) refers to a swindler and a blood-sucker. Secondly as mentioned earlier, the authorities (*pihak yang berkuasa*) are not concerned to solve the problems of the paddy planters such as irrigation for their paddy fields, pest attacks and the rapaciousness of paddy buyers. When the paddy planters complain to the authorities, no action is taken to solve their problems. In other words, the paddy planters are not only being oppressed by the paddy buyers but their welfare also is being neglected by the authorities. In the story, through the character Jaafar, Usman poses the question: "How can the lives of the poor village people be secure if they are being oppressed?"⁶⁴ Usman blames both groups for causing the poor to live permanently in poverty and suffering because of '*penindasan*' (oppression).

Another form of oppression of the poor can be seen in the relationship between the landlords and their tenants. This relationship is described in the short story "*Manusia dan Hidup*" mentioned earlier. In the first part of the story the narrator depicts the difficult life of Munah and her husband, Jaafar. They are oppressed by his landlord who has no feeling of sympathy towards his tenants. The landlord asks them to find another place to rent because the landlord needs the room for himself. It happens too to Abu, Pak Mat,

Wak Dol and Pak Ali who have to find other places to stay. Eventually, Jaafar finds out that the room is not going to be used by the landlord, but rather will be rented to someone who is richer and can afford to pay higher rent. This is part of the hardship experienced by Jaafar and his wife, Munah. Usman criticizes: "How society could be corrected and the lives of the poor be secure, if oppression and cruelty happened clearly in front of them?"⁶⁵

From this story, Usman wants to show the exploitative nature of the landlord-tenant relation and the fact that the latter were usually helpless to prevent it. Jaafar, Abu, Pak Mat, Wak Dol and Pak Ali seem to have been deceived by the landlord who wants to rent out the rooms to people who can pay more. He shows the greed of the landlord who increases the rent of the rooms without considering the problems faced by the poor in finding another place to rent. Such problems would have been much more acute in cases where the tenant had a family.

To Usman, the distress and suffering they face is the result of the defects and injustices of social stratification.⁶⁶ Usman uses the word '*penderitaan*' to indicate that they are not only poor but also suffering. It seems to Usman that as long as society is still crippled, where the rich oppress the poor, the poor will continue to live in poverty and distress. He blames the rich who live happily and comfortably but still oppress the poor who are living in difficulty. Usman criticizes the social system for causing the poor to become poorer and the rich to become richer. He believes that the social system should be corrected where the rich must feel sympathy towards the problems of survival faced by the poor.

In "*Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua*", Usman describes the trials and tribulations of an old woman. In the short story "*Manusia dan Hidup*", Usman describes the hardship caused by poverty in both the young and the old. While in the short story "*Ayah tak Kembali*", he uses children to describe the evils of poverty. This not only shows that Usman sees poverty affecting acutely people of all ages, but that he is particularly saddened when it places the lives of children at risk. It is also probable, in view of the fact that his story about the suffering of children in poverty is chronologically the most recent, that Usman had begun to realize that telling about the plight of innocent and helpless children could elicit strong reactions from his readers. Thus, he describes the poor condition of the children's house and the near starvation they endure while their father is away looking for food. Here, Usman criticizes the irresponsible leaders for the cause of the poverty whom he regards as '*orang-orang yang kononnya mengaku sebagai pemimpin*' (persons who presume to declare themselves as leaders).

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the welfare of the poor was being neglected by the political leaders and the authorities. The emphasis given to urban development with the concentration of infrastructure projects there, which was a feature of British rule, had in fact led to unequal distribution of resources. Many Malays in the rural areas had no access to basic facilities such as piped water, electricity and metalled roads. The lack of attention given to rural welfare was part and parcel of this imbalance. Usman saw this as evidence of gross neglect on the part of the government and its representatives.

iv. Capitalists and Imperialists

In "*Laut Tak Bertepi*" Usman criticizes the '*pemodal asing*' (foreign capitalists) for the poverty of fishermen as described by the narrator in the story:

All the product arising from their energies has already been sold to the foreign capitalists who are out to make a profit from the sweat and toil of the fishermen.⁶⁷

In the story, Usman does not identify '*pemodal asing*' so that it is not clear whether he means foreigners or local non-Malay (and therefore also foreign) operators such as the Chinese (who, in the context of the times, would have been more likely the case). According to the story, these capitalists oppress the fishermen by lending money to them. In return the fishermen have to sell all the fish to the capitalist. It always happens that the capitalist buys cheaply from the fishermen for he determines the price so the latter receive very little money which is not enough to cover their daily expenses. As a result the fishermen have to borrow from the capitalist. This problem continues and as long as they remain in debt these fishermen are at the mercy of the capitalists. Usman criticizes these greedy capitalists who victimize the poor fishermen and make a lot of profit from their hard work.

In "*Yang Tempang*", one of the characters in the story observes, "It is the capitalist and imperialist in this world that created the beggar".⁶⁸ His friend then suggests that by giving a donation they could help the poor beggar but the second man opposes this idea by saying: "let the beggars be themselves, let the poor people be themselves, let it be. And when all the people become poor, are suffering and are hungry then the situation will be changed".⁶⁹ Now, Usman focuses his criticism on the capitalist and imperialist as causing poverty, even though he does not mention who the capitalist is. Usman believes that because of the capitalist, the rich become richer and the poor become poorer where the richer are more concerned about their wealth and status rather than to help the poor. Together with the capitalist, the imperialist is seen by Usman as the oppressors in society. As a result, a wide gap exists in society between the powerful and the powerless and the haves and the have-nots.

It is also interesting to note that in "*Yang Tempang*" the two men have a discussion and propose that if every person becomes poor then the situation will have to improve. Here, Usman appears to suggest that if many are poor and hungry then a revolution will take place. I strongly believe that in this story Usman was influenced by socialist ideology and through the characters comes close to advocating a revolution and the overthrow of the status quo. It is natural that he exercised caution and did not voice his ideology too openly as Malaya was still under British rule and the country was in the throes of the Communist Emergency.

Note that in "*Yang Tempang*", Usman uses the term 'capitalist' not '*pemodal asing*' as found in "*Laut tak Bertepi*". Usman's criticism of the capitalist can be related to his article "*Peranan Penulis dalam Zaman Pembangunan*" (The Role of Writer in the Development Era) where he considers 'capitalists' as "a new group of oppressors" in society where "indirectly or not this group forms an association to strengthen their status so that they are still powerful and influential in the economy and in politics".⁷⁰ Usman implies that there is a direct co-relationship between capitalism and imperialism in his story, a fact he later mentions in an article "*Sastera dan Masyarakat*" (Literature and Society) when he stated that "the poverty of a labourer, the hard life of a fisherman and the landlessness of the farmers, in general, is caused by the imperialist".⁷¹

In sum, Usman believes poverty is the lot of the rural folks and the lower salaried workers in the urban sector who invariably become victims of oppression by various groups within society. Usman portrays this oppression because he believes that the role of literature is to reflect society of that era which consists of the struggle of the people, people who need freedom from the chains of pressure and oppression.⁷² In this he was perhaps a little out of line with reality for the era was by no means characterised by a trend whereby the people were rising up to fight oppression. Perhaps he was being a little carried away here in using an often bandied socialist slogan. He did not only reflect social conditions but believed literature should make people aware of their conditions and change them. His allusions to the need for revolution may have indicated his frustration with the slow pace of change.

Conclusion

There are a range of words used by Usman to describe his concept of what it means to live in poverty. The words are: '*misikin*', '*kemiskinan*', '*misikin lara*' and '*melarat*' which have almost similar meaning as poverty. However, Usman also uses other words such as '*tani*', '*desa*', '*tahu mencangkul*', '*jijik*', '*rendah*', '*sampah*', '*emas*', '*sawah*', '*pondok*', '*kelaparan*', '*kedinginan*', '*kepedihan*', '*susah benar*',

'peon', 'buruh', 'bergaji rendah', 'kurus kering', 'kerdil' and 'buncit'. He also uses metaphors such as 'hidup yang sempit' or 'kesempitan hidup', 'kepahitan hidup', 'hidupnya menderita', 'nasibnya terlantar', 'serba kurang' and 'hidup setengah mati'. The metaphors indicate that many Malays are not only poor but that their lives are full of misery. Usman also uses several idioms such as 'macam kerakap hidup di batu', 'orang yang merayap-rayap' and 'emas sesaga, sawah selebar kelengkang kera' to describe the extent of their poverty and the barrenness of their lives thus drawing a sharp contrast with the bountiful and comfortable lives of the rich. From the words he uses we can derive several concepts of poverty: poverty as class distinction; poverty as economic depression and poverty as emotional depression.

The word 'poverty' used either directly or indirectly by Usman carries a negative value. Peggy Rosenthal points out "the value a word gets from our attitude toward what it stands for. Such a value can be positive or negative, and it can be so much a part of a word's meaning that whenever we use the word we practically see a plus or minus sign over it: the sign of our approval or longing or some other positive attitude, or else of some negative attitude like our disapproval or maybe our fear".⁷³

In a speech organized by UMNO Youth at Johor Bahru delivered on 7 April 1984, Usman stressed that "poverty means starvation, sickness, food lacking in nutrition, dropping out from school, lack of medical treatment, mothers dying when delivering babies, having a short life, living in an old hut, living without a future, having no house. Yes, there are thousands of meanings of the word poverty".⁷⁴ In view of the fact that poverty was a real problem in Malaya in the 1950s it is not hard to understand why it forms an important theme in Usman's short stories of that era. Usman describes some of the ugly faces of poverty when he portrays an old lady dying alone, a baby with a bloated stomach, hungry children and a father who dies because he goes out in heavy rain to get food for the family.

He also drives home the fact that poverty touches the lives of many, from the paddy planters, fishermen, village people, low income employees such as peons or policemen right down to the beggars. Usman looks at the poor in terms of their physical poverty because he believes that it is the main aspect to the difficult life of the poor. Once their physical poverty has been solved, mental poverty can be overcome. Usman also uses his stories to inspire the poor to become "dynamic and strong in their life" in order to overcome their handicap.⁷⁵

Usman uses the term 'poverty' to show his disapproval of the actions of the rich, money-lenders, the leaders, the authorities, the capitalist and the imperialist. In fact he uses a variety of words and phrases which boil down to the fact that these groups of

people are arrogant, irresponsible, inhumane, exploitative and selfish. For instance he uses the phrases such as '*masih ada faham peringkat dan bergolong-golongan, bertinggi rendah, berdesa berkota, berkaya dan bermiskin*' and '*ibu terlalu besar, ibu terlalu tinggi*'. As he stresses in his article "*Peranan Intelektual*" (The Role of the Intellectual) as long as in society "those who are strong, powerful and big are allowed by the system to oppress the weak, thin and small" then "out of a number of chickens only one or two chickens will survive". But if the system prevents the above practices, then all the chickens will survive and become bigger.⁷⁶ Usman also believes that the difficult life of the poor is because of the attitude of the irresponsible authorities towards the welfare of the poor, who discriminate against them. He further believes that the presence of capitalists and imperialists in society increases the exploitation of the poor.

To Usman the environment and the political and administrative system are important for the situation of the poor. He asks: "Do society, environment and the system encourage people to progress and become knowledgeable, or do they become the oppressors?; do the system and the social environment encourage people to become individualistic or do they build up the spirit of co-operation?"⁷⁷ Here Usman implies that people are not poor because of inherent weaknesses in their character but because they are not being helped to progress and he appears to question the merits of encouraging individualism in society. It is obvious that Usman favours a society that encourages a collective spirit for he probably sees it as an important element in achieving a more equitable distribution of wealth.

Thus, in criticizing individuals and groups of people whom he believes to be the cause of the poor, Usman uses several approaches such as direct criticism or indirect criticism which is known as sarcasm. As well, Usman also uses idioms, questions and dialogues between the characters as his style in criticizing.

An important motivation for writing his short stories about poverty is mentioned in Usman's article "*Pengertian Bakat, Ilham dan Tugas Sasterawan*" (Meaning of Talent, Inspiration and Role of a Writer) in which he asserts that it is his responsibility as a writer "to voice the difficult life of the people so that they will realize the reason why they live in hunger, poverty and distress".⁷⁸ Usman wants raise the awareness of the poor because he believes that "changes in society do not come from the leader or the intellectual but come from society and the people itself; that is, the farmers and the labourers". He gives an example: "the abolition of slavery is not because of the struggle by the intellectual, but from the awareness of the slaves themselves, and from this leaders emerge, whose role is to cut the chain which binds the slaves".⁷⁹ In other words, Usman uses his short stories to motivate the poor to take control of their lives and work for a better future life.

Endnotes

- ¹ Zurinah Hassan, *Sasterawan Negara Usman Awang*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1990, p. 3, 'Setelah kematian ibunya, kehidupan Usman semakin terbiar dan susah.'
- ² Usman Awang, *Gelombang: Sajak-sajak Pilihan 1949-1960*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1961, p. 22 stated as :
- Sesekali kilat menyambar ngeri,
Pondok usang dimandi hujan dinihari,
Adik-adik menangis menggigil menghampiri,
Manakah ayah yang tak pulang sampai kini ?
(Ibu tercinta telah meninggal dunia,
Ayah miskin jauh pergi membuat huma.)*
- ³ Usman Awang, *Tulang-tulang Berserakan*, Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Melayu Baru, 1966, pp. 34-35. He states: "It isn't that I haven't seen people doing anything wrong. You only have to go outside the police station to see that. But can you arrest someone like Wak Siraj, who's blocking the pavement with his sate bins? How much money can he earn? If he gets fined, then what's he going to eat? What are his wife and children going to eat? Supposing they take his sate bins off him as well?
- We could arrest the Chinese ice vendor. He's unlicensed and he sells it outside the Capitol cinema. But just look. There's his two children squatting next to him. They help him to push the ice cart along. Just, look. How much money does he earn? Goodness knows if its sufficient to pay for food for his wife and children. What's more, if he's arrested, then where is he going to find money to pay for a fine?"
- ⁴ J. Milton Cowan (ed.), *Hans Wehr: A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1966, p. 909.
- ⁵ *Kamus Dewan Edisi Baru*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1989, p. 831 states 'miskin' means 'tidak berharta benda', 'serba kekurangan (dalam barang-barang keperluan hidup)', 'melarat', 'papa'.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 907 states 'papa' means 'sangat miskin'. 'Papa kedana' means 'terlalu papa'. 'Kepapaan' means 'keadaan papa'.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 715 states 'melarat' means 'tidak menentu', 'tidak terjaga'.
- ⁸ R.A. Datoek Besar and R. Roolvink (ed.), *Hikajat Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir Munshi*, Djakarta and Amsterdam: Djambatan, 1953, p. 419. Quoted from Anthony Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya: Contesting Nationalism and the Expansion of the Public Sphere*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 15.
- ⁹ Za'ba, "Kemiskinan Orang Melayu", *Al-Ikhwān*, 16 Mac 1927, p. 132. See also Ungku A. Aziz, *Jejak-jejak di Pantai Zaman*, Kuala Lumpur: Jabatan Penerbitan Universiti Malaya, 1987, p. 4 states : 'Orang-orang kita Melayu ini pada hitungan am atau jumlahnya ialah kaum yang tersangat miskin. Kemiskinan itu ialah sifat terlebih sangat lengkap dan nyata daripada lain-lain sifat kebangsaannya dan ialah juga sebenar-benar kekurangan yang menjadikan mereka kalah atau ketinggalan di belakang dalam perlumbaan kemajuan. Miskin pada wang ringgit dan harta benda, miskin pada cita-cita, miskin pada pelajaran dan latihan pengetahuan. Perkataan miskin atau kemiskinan seperti yang diperkatakan bagi mereka itu bukanlah semata-mata dimaksudkan bermakna tiada berharta atau tiada kaya sahaja, melainkan adalah iaitu bermakna beberapa banyak dan beberapa ganda terlebih dahsyat daripada itu. Kemiskinan orang-orang Melayu itu ialah kemiskinan yang meliputi serba serbinya dan mengelilingi mereka pada segala pihaknya.'
- ¹⁰ Ungku A. Aziz, "Footprints on the Sands of Time - The Malay Poverty Concept Over 50 Years From Za'ba to Aziz and the Second Malaysia Five Year Plan", a paper presented at the 1974 Malaysian Economic Association Meeting on 25 - 27 March 1974 in Kuala Lumpur, p. 3.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 17.
- ¹³ S. Husin Ali, *Kemiskinan dan Kelaparan Tanah di Kelantan*, Petaling Jaya: Karangkrak Sdn. Berhad, 1978, pp. 1 - 2 states 'kemiskinan merupakan keadaan di mana wujud kekurangan mendapatkan keperluan-keperluan asasi, iaitu makanan, perumahan serta pakaian, dan kemudahan-kemudahan sosial seperti air, api, hospital serta sekolah. Dari segi ekonomi keadaan ini timbul sebab ketiadaan atau kekurangan kemampuan disebabkan oleh tingkat pendapatan, pemilikan dan pekerjaan yang rendah. Dari segi sosial golongan yang dikatakan miskin itu menduduki lapisan bawahan dalam sistem susunlapis masyarakat.'
- ¹⁴ Salleh Ismail, "Poverty in Peninsular Malaysia: Its Dimension and Differential Prevalence", Phd thesis, University of Michigan, 1983, pp. 113 - 114.
- ¹⁵ Za'ba, "Jalan Keselamatan bagi Orang Melayu" in Ungku A. Aziz, *Jejak-jejak di Pantai Zaman*, Kuala Lumpur: Jabatan Penerbitan Universiti Malaya, 1987, p. 57. See also Ungku A. Aziz (1974), p. 4. Za'ba states 'Bahawasanya keselamatan orang-orang Melayu ini pada pihak jalan kehidupannya (pencariannya) dan pada pihak perangai-perangai yang kekurangan itu hanyalah boleh didapati pada satu jalan sahaja, iaitu

diubati kemiskinannya yang pada pihak otak itu - yakni kemiskinan pengetahuannya - dengan jalan diberi mereka itu pelajaran-pelajaran daripada jenis yang betul.'

16 Ungku A. Aziz (1987), *ibid.*, p. 66.

17 Ungku A. Aziz (1974), *op. cit.*, p. 4.

18 Za'ba, *Al-Ikhwān*, 1 June 1927. Quoted from Adnan Haji Nawang, *Za'ba Patriot dan Pendeta Melayu*, Kuala Lumpur: Yayasan Penataran Ilmu, 1994, p. 127 states: 'Pekerjaan menabur pengetahuan umum dalam perkara berjimat-cermat, membela kampung halaman, menjaga kesihatan, berternak dan membela hidup-hidupan, bercucuk tanam, berjual-beli dan berniaga yang kecil-kecil dan lain-lain pengetahuan seperti itu bagi orang kebanyakan boleh dibuat dengan menjalankan propaganda ... berkhutbah, bersyarah, menyeru-nyeru, menasihati ... (melalui) risalah-risalah kecil yang senang-senang mengenai segala perkara itu. Maka sekalian itu dibuat dengan jalan bekerja sama-sama yakni bersatu dan bersekutu ramai-ramai (agak seratus dua ratus orang sekurang-kurangnya). Tiap-tiap seorang bekerja membuat bahagiannya.'

19 Ungku A. Aziz, *Rencana-rencana Ekonomi dan Kemiskinan*, Singapore: Pustaka Melayu, 1959, pp. 6 - 15. See also Ungku A. Aziz, "The Interdependent Development of Agriculture and Other Industries", *Malayan Economic Review*, Volume 4, 1959, pp. 24 - 26.

20 S. Husin Ali, *Orang Melayu: Masalah dan Masa Depan*, Kuala Lumpur: Penerbitan Adabi Sdn. Bhd., 1979, p. 92.

21 Salleh Ismail, *op. cit.*, pp. 21 - 22.

22 Usman Awang, "Kesusasteraan Alat Penting Mengisi Kemerdekaan", *Mingguan Melayu*, 9 Mac 1952 mentions that: 'Kita seharusnya memperkatakan suara rakyat seluruhnya, dari kaum buruh, penarik beca, kaum tani, drebar, nelayan dan kaum peladang yang selamanya hidup menderita dan dalam kemiskinan.'

23 Usman Awang, "Kesusasteraan ialah Ilmu Pengetahuan yang Dipunyai oleh Seluruh Bangsa", *Mingguan Melayu*, 17 February 1952.

24 *Utusan Zaman*, 10 April 1949.

25 "Surat Norliah yang Akhir", 'Apakah akan gunanya seorang pemuda desa yang hanya tahu mencangkul itu di dalam keluarga kita yang moden dan tinggal di bandar besar ini.'

26 *Degup Jantung*, Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Melayu Baru, 1963, pp. 48 - 54.

27 As mentioned by Adibah Amin in "Kata Pengantar", *Degup Jantung*, Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Melayu Baru, 1963, pp. 3 - 4.

28 "Surat dari Seorang Mata-mata", p. 51, '...sering kudengar Mariam berbisik-bisik dengan adiknya yang baru pulang dari sekolah menyuruh makan sedikit-sedikit kerana nasi tak cukup, hingga kadang-kadang sudunya sudah berlaga dengan buntut periuk mengukut kerak nasinya. Kesihan benar aku mendengarnya, pada hal adiknya itu sangat lapar dan penat kerana baru balik dari sekolah dengan berjalan kaki di tengah terik matahari'.

29 "Surat dari Seorang Mata-mata", p. 50, 'apakah cara mengatasi penderitaan ini cukup hanya dengan doa saja?'

30 *Utusan Zaman*, 7 May 1950.

31 George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980, p. 5.

32 *Utusan Zaman*, 17 September 1950.

33 *Utusan Zaman*, 20 May 1951.

34 "Laut tak Bertepi", 'hidup kaum nelayan yang tak berubah-ubah ini terus menerus dari sejak kecil, besar, berkahwin, beranak, bercucu dan turun temurun.'

35 *Utusan Zaman*, 10 June 1951.

36 "Manusia dan Hidup", 'Kenapakah hidup mereka yang seperti Jaafar itu susah benar, sedang mereka di dalam lingkungan tanah air sendiri?'

37 *Mastika*, October 1954, pp. 48 - 50.

38 *Mastika*, December 1954, pp. 44 - 47 & 50.

39 "Ayah tak Kembali", p. 45, 'Perut Sin lapar, mak. Sin belum makan nasi.'

40 "Ayah tak Kembali", p. 45, 'Pakaian orang tiga beranak itu mulai lembab. Kemudian mulai banyak air hinggap di pakaian mereka dan basahlah.'

41 "Ayah tak Kembali", pp. 44-45, 'Timah sebenarnya gadis desa yang miskin - kemiskinan yang tetap diwarisi dari ayah dan bondanya. Dan ayah dan bondanya mewarisi kemiskinan itu dari datuk nenek Timah'.

42 *Mastika*, March 1956, pp. 42 - 49.

43 Usman Awang, "Uda dan Dara", in Asraf (ed.), *Mekar dan Segar*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1962, pp. 133-153

44 "Uda dan Dara", p. 141, 'Uda yang miskin lara, sawah hanya selebar kangkang kera'.

45 *Degup Jantung*, Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Melayu Baru, 1963, pp. 157 - 164.

- 46 "Kopral Tua", p. 162, 'Kau ingat boleh hidup dengan gaji sebanyak itu ?'
- 47 "Kopral Tua", p. 163, 'kehidupan yang sempit.'
- 48 George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *op. cit.*, pp. 14 - 15.
- 49 Khasnor Johan, *Educating the Malay Elite: The Malay College Kuala Kangsar, 1905-1941*, Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Antara Sdn. Bhd., 1996, p. 7.
- 50 "Surat Norlia yang Akhir", 'Apalah akan gunanya seorang pemuda desa yang hanya tahu mencangkul itu di dalam keluarga kita yang moden dan tinggal di bandar besar ini. Engkau tidak bermata dan tidak berhati...mencari jodoh anak desa'.
- 51 "Untuk Jadi Isteri Orang Bangsawan", 'mereka memandang jijik dan rendah kepada orang-orang yang merayap-rayap seperti aku'.
- 52 "Uda dan Dara", p. 45, 'kalau si Uda benar-benar nak berteman, rundingkanlah dengan yang lain, yang sama sepadan.'
- 53 "Uda dan Dara", p. 45, 'terasa oleh Uda rendahnya diri, terasa miskinnya hidup.'
- 54 "Uda dan Dara", p. 48-49. 'kau terlalu menurut perasaanmu anak, turunan kita turunan berdarjat, duduk kita duduk bertempat, tak ada orang di seluruh kampung ini yang tak menaruh hormat, tak ada orang yang lebih darjat. Mengapa benar anak buta mata, memilih anak turunan gembala, anak desa emas sesaga, sawah selebar kelengkang kera?'
- 55 Anthony Milner, *op. cit.*, p. 43.
- 56 *Ibid.*
- 57 "Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua", 'Sedih, hebat, dahsyat, perlakuan-perlakuan di dalam masyarakat kita.'
- 58 "Uda dan Dara", p. 49. 'ibu, ibu terlalu besar, maka ibu membenarkan diri, ibu terlalu tinggi, maka ibu menjadi begini, ibu terlalu kaya, maka ibu merasa mulia, mulia daripada orang yang sawahnya selebar kelengkang kera. Ibu tak tahukan kasih hati, ibu tak arif menimbang rasa, maka ibu mendera kami.'
- 59 "Kopral Tua", p. 163, 'Siapa yang pernah ambil tau tentang gaji mata-mata?'
- 60 "Manusia dan Hidup", 'Kenapakah hidup mereka yang seperti Jaafar itu susah benar, sedang mereka di dalam lingkungan tanah air sendiri?'
- 61 "Manusia dan Hidup", 'harapan rakyat kampung bagi pihak yang berkuasa itu datang jauh sekali, apalagi untuk ambil tahu'.
- 62 "Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua", 'Apakah pula ertinya sebuah badan kebajikan yang hanya mementingkan nasib segolongan rakyat yang mempunyai penghidupan mewah?'
- 63 "Uda dan Dara", p. 46, 'Kalau semua orang kampung ini tak makan, mengapa saya harus memberi makan ? Mengapa saya yang akan berugi-rugi kerana itu?'
- 64 "Manusia dan Hidup", 'Bagaimanakah nasib rakyat kampung yang miskin-miskin akan terjamin dengan hidupnya jika penindasan pada mereka diperlakukan berterang-terang?'
- 65 "Manusia dan Hidup", 'Manakah masyarakat akan tersusun baik dan rakyat miskin akan terjamin hidupnya, jika penindasan dan kezaliman diperlakukan dengan terang-terang di hadapan mata?'
- 66 "Manusia dan Hidup", 'penderitaan-penderitaan hidup yang disebabkan oleh susunan masyarakat yang pincang dan tak adil.'
- 67 "Laut tak Bertepi", 'segala hasil usaha tenaga mereka itu telah lebih dahulu terjual pada pemodal-pemodal asing yang memang mencari keuntungan dari hasil keringat dan tenaga nelayan-nelayan.'
- 68 "Yang Tempang", p. 50, 'Kapitalis dan imperialis dalam dunia ini melahirkan pengemis.'
- 69 "Yang Tempang", p. 50, '...biar pengemis itu begitu, biar seluruh orang-orang miskin begitu, biarkan, biarkan. Dan nanti setelah seluruh rakyat menjadi miskin, sengsara dan lapar, maka keadaan akan bertukar'.
- 70 Usman Awang, "Peranan Penulis dalam Zaman Pembangunan", *Penulis*, Tahun 4, Bilangan I - II, April-August 1970. Quoted from Dinsman and Sutung Umar Rs (eds.), *Sikap dan Pemikiran Usman Awang*, Petaling Jaya: Penerbit Fajar Bakti, 1983, p. 61.
- 71 Usman Awang, "Sastera dan Masyarakat", a talk organized by Writers of Johore Association, Johor Bahru in 1977. Quoted from Dinsman and Sutung Umar Rs (eds.), *ibid.*, p. 82.
- 72 Usman Awang, "Pengalaman Saya Menulis Sajak" in Dinsman and Sutung Umar Rs (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 96, 'kesusasteraan harus mencerminkan masyarakat zamannya! Dan masyarakat zaman kita yang harus dicerminkan itu tidak lain dari perjuangan rakyat, rakyat yang inginkan kebebasan dari segala belenggu yang merantainya, dari penekanan dan penindasan yang menindasnya.'
- 73 Peggy Rosenthal, *Words and Value: Some Leading Words and Where They Lead Us*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1984, p. 5.
- 74 Usman Awang, speech on "Malam Jasamu Dikenang" organized by UMNO Youth Taman Sentosa at Kampung Datuk Sulaiman Menteri, Johor Bahru on 7 April 1984. Published in *Berita Harian* on 14 April 1984 under the title "Pemuda UMNO Pimpinan Anwar Banyak Bezanya" states 'kemiskinan bererti kelaparan, penyakit, kurang zat makanan, keciciran dalam pelajaran, kurang perubatan, kematian ibu

ketika melahirkan, usia tidak panjang, sebuah pondok usang, tidak punya masa depan, hidup menumpang. Ya, ada seribu pengertian dalam sepatah kata kemiskinan.'

⁷⁵ Usman Awang, "Kesusasteraan Alat Penting Mengisi Kemerdekaan", *Mingguan Melayu*, 9 March 1952.

⁷⁶ Usman Awang, "Peranan Intelektual", a talk to Malayan and Singaporean students. Organized by London Union of Malaysian Students on 25 May 1970. Quoted from Usman Awang, *Peranan Intelektual*, Petaling Jaya: Insan, 1987, pp. 8 - 9 stated 'maka barangkali seekor dua saja anak-anak ayam itu yang dapat hidup dan besar, yang bernasib baik terlepas dari sistem terbuka dan terdedah, di mana siapa kuat, siapa berkuasa, siapa besar dihalalkan dan dibolehkan oleh sistemnya menekan yang lemah, menindas yang kurus dan menelan yang kecil.'

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9 stated 'apakah masyarakat itu, suasana dan sistemnya mendorong orang untuk maju dan berilmu, ataupun mendorong orang untuk menjadi penindas dan pemeras dan saling menekan, apakah sistem dan suasana masyarakat itu menjadi orang bersifat individualistik ataupun membina semangat tolong-menolong dan gotong-royong?'

⁷⁸ Usman Awang, "Pengertian Bakat, Ilham dan Tugas Sasterawan", *Utusan Zaman*, 21 March 1954.

⁷⁹ Usman Awang, "Peranan Intelektual", *op. cit.*, p. 12 stated 'Sejarah perubahan sesuatu masyarakat dan negara bukan kerana pimpinan dan perjuangan intelektual, tetapi lahir dan timbul dari masyarakat dan perjuangan rakyat itu sendiri, kaum taninya dan kaum buruhnya...Hapusnya perhambaan bukan kerana perjuangan intelektual, tetapi kerana kesedaran hamba abdi itu sendiri, dan daripada merekalah lahir pemimpin yang memutuskan rantai yang membelenggui mereka.'

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CONCEPT OF JUSTICE

The common usage of words expressing the notions of justice or injustice is not only important in the abstract sense, but also illuminating for an understanding of the manifold aspects of justice. Since the literal meaning of words is ultimately the outgrowth of their social or everyday meaning, writers and thinkers are likely to be influenced by it in the articulation and rationalization of men's needs and expectations in the struggle to achieve justice and other human ideals.¹ Usman Awang, as a writer, is likewise not exempt from being influenced by the state of his society. Writing during the last decade of British rule as well as in post-independence Malaysia, he provides an interesting study of how his environment shaped his perception of justice, the issues he raises and the vocabulary he uses.

In this chapter, I will attempt to examine the concept of justice from Usman's perspective based on a number of his short stories. First, I begin this chapter by explaining the keyword '*keadilan*' (justice) in terms of its root meaning, derivations and definitions followed by a discussion of the idea of justice in traditional Malay society. Then I describe Usman's experiences of injustice which is followed by the main section of this chapter, that is a discussion of the representation of justice in some of Usman Awang's short stories. Finally from this analysis, Usman Awang's conceptual framework of social justice will be defined to understand his development of a critical tradition.

Definitions

In the Malay language, the word for justice, '*keadilan*', comes from the root word '*adil*'. The etymology of the word '*adil*' comes from an Arabic word '*adl*'. According to *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* the root '*adl*' means "straightness, straightforwardness; justice, impartiality; fairness, equitableness, probity, honesty, uprightness; equitable composition, just compromise".² According to the Malay dictionary, *Kamus Dewan Edisi Baru*, the Malay word '*adil*' means first, "based on expedient judgement (procedure, stipulation and so on) or accordance judgement (concerning people, action, punishment, result, law and so on), not one sided (when making a decision and so on), not arbitrary. Second, not more or less from expedient, rightly". With the addition of '*ke...an*' to the stem '*adil*', the word '*keadilan*' means "element (behaviour, action and so on) of justice". While with the addition of the negative marker '*tidak*' the word '*ketidakadilan*' means "injustice".³

From the above definition in the Malay dictionary it can be seen that the word '*adil*' is closely associated with a considered judgement. It implies a decision which must be reasonable, does not favour any person or side at the expense of the other and is not based on arbitrariness. It is also to be perceived as right as opposed to wrong which implies that the decision has to be seen as being fair. It is also interesting to note here that although the word '*adil*' comes from an Arabic root which has a close link with Islam and is inseparable from morality and religion, and although Malays are Muslims, the word has acquired properties that are not closely linked with morality and religion. From the dictionary definition of the word '*adil*' we can see that the meaning of justice has no relationship with '*makruf*' (good) or '*munkar*' (evil) which are among the values, principles and laws in Islam.

Besides the word '*adil*', there are other Malay words which have a similar meaning to "justice". The words are '*seimbang*', '*imbang*', '*saksama*', '*sama rata*', '*sama tengah*', '*menyamartakan*' and '*setimpal*'.⁴ All these words are concerned with the ideas of balance. For instance the word '*seimbang*' means balanced, equal weight and the words '*sama tengah*' means even, evenly centered, the same. Thus, justice is about equal balance, be it balanced judgement or achieving a right balance in a situation. This is clearly evident from the fact that the words '*adil*' and '*saksama*' often come together in the phrase '*adil*' dan '*saksama*' or '*adil lagi saksama*' which convey the idea of a just and balanced person or act.

Another word '*murah*' which indicates 'liberal', 'merciful', 'generous' and 'bounteous' is often associated with '*adil*'. The two words are often found together, though '*adil*' occasionally stands alone in a context where one might usually expect to find them in conjunction. In traditional Malay literature of the pre-modern era, the qualities '*adil*' and '*murah*' are often associated with successful rulers of flourishing states. The 18th century court text, *Hikayat Patani*, describes Sultan Mudhaffar Shah of Patani as having ruled with propriety (*adil*) and generosity (*murah*), while the "land of Patani increased in peace and prosperity and foreign traders came and went in great numbers".⁵ Here it is implied that the ideal ruler is one who is just and generous and that when these two qualities go hand in hand, then the country experiences peace and prosperity.

In the words '*adil*', '*seimbang*' and '*murah*', which are traditional Malay expressions, one can see that in pre-modern times, Malay society held values which incorporated the ideas of justice, balance and generosity. But as we shall see it was in the ways such values were applied that traditional society differed from contemporary Malay society. This contrast has been much influenced by the colonial experience and western education which brought with them new perceptions on the question of justice in

contemporary Malaysia. Then again the multicultural nature of Malayan/Malaysian society and the political agenda of the Malays, as well as the other racial groups in the country, have also helped to shape the way the question of justice is defined and approached. An example can be seen in the search for economic justice in Malaysia where each race wants to be given equal rights with the other races in the country. Similarly in the aspect of political justice all Malaysians want to have the right to vote, to choose their own leaders and to voice or to form an association.

The way Malaysians express what they mean by economic and political justice today indicates that justice as a concept has been an issue in the society. Indeed, the issue of justice can even be differently seen from one period to another. For instance, the conception of justice in traditional Malay society as evident during the Melaka Sultanate will be seen below to be different from that prevailing in later eras.

The Idea of Justice in Traditional Malay Society

According to *Sejarah Melayu*, one of the most comprehensive records of the development and values of traditional society written sometime in the early 17th century,⁶ an agreement was reached between the first Malay ruler, Sang Sapurba or Nila Pahlawan and his local chief, Demang Lebar Daun which lays down the basic relations between the Malay ruler and their subjects. It begins when Sang Sapurba, who is afflicted by an incurable disease, asks for the hand of Demang Lebar Daun's daughter, Wan Sendiri. Although he was worried that his daughter would be infected by the disease, Demang Lebar Daun, nevertheless gives his consent to the union in exchange for Sang Sapurba's protection and patronage for his people. Thus, an agreement was made that :

...the descendants of your humble servant (Demang Lebar Daun) shall be well treated by your (Sang Sapurba's) descendants. If they offend, they shall not, however grave their offence, be humiliated or reviled with evil words; if their offence is grave, let them be put to death, if that is in accordance with Muhamaddan law.⁷

Sang Sapurba on his part agrees to the conditions provided that the Lemang Lebar Daun pledges unquestioning loyalty to him and his descendants on behalf of the Malay subjects "...that your descendants shall never to the end of time be disloyal to my descendants, even if they are cruel and evil".⁸

Malays believe that the agreement set the tone for ruler-subject relations in Malay society. Thus, Malay rulers are said to have never put their subjects to shame. On the other hand, the Malay subjects are almost never disloyal or treacherous to their rulers, even if their rulers behave cruelly or unjustly towards them. In *Sejarah Melayu*, the ideal

situation is described in the incident when Raja Muhammad kills on the spot Tun Besar (Bendahara Paduka Raja's son) after the latter accidentally knocks off his head-dress during a game of '*sepak raga*' (a ball game). Despite the rather drastic punishment for what was unmistakably an accident, the bereaved father, Bendahara Paduka Raja, refuses to avenge his son's death because he believes that "it is never the custom; Malay subjects never ever commit treason".⁹

But, this assertion by the Bendahara in support of traditional Malay values is challenged in *Hikayat Hang Tuah*¹⁰, a 17th century text. The *hikayat* tells the story of how Hang Tuah, a legendary Malay hero, is slandered by jealous officials and accused of carrying on an illicit romance with the ruler's favourite concubine. The Sultan, without further ado, orders the Bendahara to have Hang Tuah killed.¹¹ However, the Bendahara who is convinced of his innocence secretly hides him. Hang Jebat who thinks his friend is dead, rebels "defying the ruler and the court for their unjust treatment of Hang Tuah"¹² throwing the palace into chaos. It is at this point that the Bendahara produces Hang Tuah who carries out the Sultan's request that he punish Hang Jebat. Despite the fact, that Hang Jebat had acted out of love for Hang Tuah and out of the conviction that his friend had been wronged, the author of the *hikayat* sees Hang Tuah as the hero and Hang Jebat as the villain.

Today, however, when Malays look at the question of justice and examine the way it is perceived in the traditional Malay value system, it is popular among those who are aware of the legend of Hang Tuah, to see Hang Jebat as the hero who fought for justice. Hang Jebat's revolt is cited by some as the turning point in the Malay tradition of giving total loyalty to the ruler, and by others as evidence that even in traditional Malay society loyalty to the ruler was not given blindly. At the crux of the question of loyalty is the behaviour of the ruling classes which, as we have seen in the story of the killing of Tun Besar and the sentencing of Hang Tuah, suggest tyranny and arbitrariness.

While both the 17th century Malay texts mentioned are seldom judgemental when they describe the appalling behaviour of the ruling classes, Abdullah Kadir Munshi, the father of modern Malay literature, took them to task in his work *Hikayat Pelayaran Abdullah* based on his travels from Singapore to Pahang, Trengganu and Kelantan in the middle of the 19th century. Considered as "one of the earliest liberal Malay critics of the sultanate system",¹³ he was "one of the first to reflect consciously on the problem of poverty and backwardness among the Malays"¹⁴ and draw the connection between it and the behaviour of the Malay rulers. During his travels he was struck by the backwardness of the Malays on the east coast of Malaya and made the observation that the root cause of the poverty and economic backwardness was the severance of the link between reward and effort by the oppressive ruling elite. According to him, feudal oppression had killed

the people's incentive and will to work. For instance in Pahang, "the subjects are in constant fear of the injustice and greed of the ruling house and their nobles". Similar conditions were observed by him in Trengganu: "The people are condemned to inactivity. Widespread injustice and oppression lead to the decline of civilisation".¹⁵ According to Abdullah, the people had no choice but to accept the injustice and inhumanities of feudalism: "the people...felt themselves as slaves because they had to follow the silly and unjust customs...even if they wanted to abandon the customs, they did not dare to do so".¹⁶

Abdullah noticed that the ruling classes were not interested in improving and reforming their society. Their thinking was basically opposed to any changes which might threaten or affect their interests. Maintaining the status quo was their chief concern as the existing situation served their vested interests best. Furthermore, they held on to the '*adat*' or customs of the olden days which continue to encourage the subjects to believe that "whoever changes or breaks them will be affected adversely by the '*daulat*'¹⁷ of the past rulers".¹⁸

Thus, Hang Jebat's action and Abdullah's observations of the actions of Malay rulers were often, in the early years when Malays sought to integrate western notions of justice, cited to justify criticism of injustice occurring in their society. In the 20th century, during the period of British colonial rule in Malaya, when various privileges were given to the aristocratic and elite groups, several writers through their works criticized the policy of encouraging social inequality. One of them was Usman Awang.

Usman's Experiences of Injustice

Usman would have read *Sejarah Melayu* and *Hikayat Hang Tuah* while he was at school. If these two books did not influence Usman's perception of the concept of justice in the early years of his writing career, they, nevertheless, would have been meaningful to him in terms of their elucidation of the values of traditional Malay society. Many years later, in 1962, the episode involving Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat inspired him to write a play entitled *Matinya Seorang Pahlawan* (Death of a Warrior).¹⁹ In this work, he regards Hang Jebat as the warrior and hero instead of Hang Tuah because of his courage in opposing an unjust ruler.

Living in a period where the elite and aristocratic groups were given special privileges by the British colonial government, Usman would have observed many acts of social injustice in his society. For example, he would have been aware that the government had introduced policies which favoured the Malay upper class. As mentioned

in Chapter 1, in education before the Second World War, for instance, the Malay elite graduates from the Malay College in Kuala Kangsar (MCKK) were accepted as administrators in the Malay Administrative Service (MAS), while the commoners who graduated from Sultan Idris Teacher College (SITC) in Tanjung Malim, became school teachers in rural village schools. As a result, when he observed unjust situations or when some of them touched his life, he expresses them through his works. For instance, in 1955 there was a strike of labourers because of the injustice of the employer. In one of his articles, Usman queries :

Is it fair that someone who is loyal to the society, employer and others should himself and his children live in distress? Is it fair for someone who makes a profit for his company to live in poverty in a small room? Is it fair that someone who has worked hard does not receive his rights as an employee?²⁰

In 1958, Usman Awang saw another instance which portrayed the injustice being done to the poor people. While he was waiting for a bus to go home, he saw a Law Enforcement Officer approach a Chinese woman selling bananas and asked to see her selling licence. As she was very poor she could not afford to get one. Because she was trading illegally, the officer seized the woman's basket and ordered her into a police truck to be sent to a police station. This scene gave him the idea to write the poem "*Penjual Pisang di Kaki Lima*" (Sidewalk Banana Seller).²¹ Feelings of humanity are recorded by Usman towards the tragedy of the old Chinese woman. He feels disappointed by the action taken by the officer enforcing the law. Although Usman acknowledged that the officer had the right to take action against the old woman, he felt that consideration should have been given to the fact that the woman was poor.

In 1961, a strike lasting for a hundred days, from August until November, took place by *Utusan Melayu*'s workers who were struggling for justice from their employer. After *Utusan Melayu* was transferred to Kuala Lumpur from Singapore, the manager changed the paper's policy of critical reporting of the government to one of non-criticism. The new policy was unacceptable to the editors and workers who felt they were not being given freedom to criticize the government.²² Usman, one of the *Utusan Melayu*'s employees protested against the new policy because it was not fair to the editors and workers in terms of giving press freedom. He expresses his protest in his poem "*Duri dan Api*" (The Thorn and Fire) published in 1961 and his short story "*Sebuah Khemah Didirikan*" (A Tent is Put Up) published in 1963.

Usman's view on social justice was expressed directly in 1970 through his article entitled "*Peranan Penulis dalam Zaman Pembangunan*" (The Role of the Writer in the Development Era). Here, he stated that the role of the writer is to protect and to struggle for venerable and majestic values, which generally could be accepted and respected by

people: that is truth - justice - freedom and elements of humanity.²³ However, he had already begun to write about this issue in his short stories since 1950 as can be seen in "*Surat dari Seorang Mata-mata*" (Letter from a Policeman), "*Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua*" (The Fate of an Old Mother) and "*Untuk Jadi Isteri Orang Bangsawan*" (To Be a Nobleman's Wife). Most of his short stories are concerned with injustice received by the poor from the rich, the authorities or the leaders. His fervent hope in depicting it in his short stories is that the "common people will begin to receive social justice, in contradiction to the privileges at present reserved for the rich and the elite".²⁴

Justice is at the core of Usman's stories and even though he does not address it directly in all his narratives, it permeates through and creates a powerful impression to the reader of his total commitment to its achievement. As we shall see, Usman's concept of a just society is one in which there is a democracy, where all members of the society are entitled to equal justice and fair treatment, and where factors such as social position and standing are irrelevant in determining decisions related to questions of personal happiness such as marriage, work satisfaction such as pay and working conditions, the provision of public services and the enforcement of rules and regulations. In this, his ideas are obviously in conflict with the values of traditional Malay society. Some of the features of the society that he envisions will become clearer in the following analysis of Usman Awang's short stories, which depict his concept of justice studied from three angles, namely, justice as equality and fairness in treatment, justice as equality in term of status and justice as equality in term of legality. However, to understand Usman's concept of justice we must understand his concept of injustice which is often depicted in his short stories.

i. Equality and Fairness in Treatment

When there is an inequitable distribution of the country's wealth and only a certain group of people benefit, it will widen the gap between the rich and the poor. In several of his short stories, Usman shows the Government's role in encouraging this state of affairs. In 1950, the British government in Malaya introduced the "Benham Report" to overcome the pay problem of government servants.²⁵ However, the Report created disappointment to the majority of government servants, especially those on lower incomes because it made the rich become richer but the poor become poorer. One would have expected that the revision of pay by the government would be fair to avoid dissatisfaction among the government servants, especially to the lower incomes but it was not to be.

The issue of inequitable distribution of resources in society, is portrayed by Usman in his short story entitled "*Surat dari Seorang Mata-mata*" (A Letter from a Policeman).²⁶ In the story, discrimination was seen in the treatment of policemen of the lower ranks in respect to the pay scheme implemented by the authorities. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the story was based on Usman's experience as a policeman and portrayed in the scene when Wak Dol, an old lower ranking policeman, reads in the newspaper that the authorities have made some revisions to government workers' pay. However, the increase in pay only affected high ranking officers. This generated dissatisfaction among the lower ranking policemen. However, even though Wak Dol is disappointed that the pay revision does not benefit him and his colleagues, he does not express it in terms of '*ketidakadilan*' (injustice). Rather, he indicates his disappointment by comparing the pay of high ranking officers with that of the lower ranking policemen. Ahmad, another lower ranking policeman merely expresses his haplessness by saying that nobody wants to take care of their fate, although their responsibilities were no less heavy than those of the high ranking officers, especially during the Emergency.²⁷

It may well be that Usman as an author did not use the word '*ketidakadilan*', because during that time, he was a serving policeman and it would have affected his career if the authorities learned of his criticism or dissatisfaction regarding the pay revision. Therefore, the word '*ketidakadilan*' could not be expressed directly. However in order to depict that injustice had occurred, Usman uses the words '*tidak juga berubah*' (has not changed) in relation to the pay of lower ranking policemen and '*berubah*' (change) in relation to higher ranking officers, as can be seen in the sentences "Our pay has not changed. The changes to the pay was made only for higher ranking officers and those who live luxuriously".²⁸ By using the words '*tidak juga berubah*' and '*berubah*', Usman wants to describe that there is unequal treatment where one group gets pay increments while another gets none. He highlights the lack of balance which describes his idea of injustice. When there is inequality, then injustice occurs. Therefore from here, Usman's notion of justice is that, when a group gets a pay increase (*berubah*), the other group also should get an increase and not '*tidak juga berubah*'.

To Usman, it is unfair if the authorities show bias without taking into consideration the duties of the lower ranking officers. This can be seen as the narrator comments: "Furthermore, I feel our job [responsibility] if it is not more it is not less either compared to other jobs, especially during this emergency".²⁹ Usman uses the words '*tidak lebih maka tidak pula kurang*' (it is not more it is not less) to describe that the responsibility of the lower ranking policemen is equal to that of higher ranking policemen. Here, Usman highlights the equality of responsibility. Thus, from the words '*tidak juga berubah*', '*berubah*' and '*tidak lebih maka tidak pula kurang*' we can understand Usman's concept of justice as equality in treatment, where the lower ranking

policeman should have received equal treatment from the authorities as the higher ranking policemen do.

Through the character Ahmad, Usman indirectly criticizes the authorities for being irresponsible: "one or two appeals through newspapers only become smoke blown by the wind to disappear in the sky".³⁰ Again, Usman criticizes and queries the authorities: "Until when will situations like this, that is sad incidents and sufferings which I have seen and experienced, end with change that will bring relief to all our lives?".³¹ He concludes that "no one wants to defend us (our fate)".³² There appears to be a tone of defeatism in these utterances. Nevertheless, it seems later Usman tries to give hope for a better life. Through Ahmad, he wants the lower ranking policemen to do something to change their own fortunes. Usman wants them to struggle for a better life and not just wait without doing anything. Ahmad says firmly :

Actually we are not making an effort to determine our fate, said I with firmness. We are merely waiting for pity from others like a beggar on the side-walk.³³

The emphasis here is on the words '*hanya menanti*' (merely waiting). Ahmad sees the problems of the policemen and realises that they should do something about their poor pay. There is the suggestion here that they have to fight to get justice, although it is not boldly stated.

There are several points which Usman wants to put forward in the story. Firstly, the implementation of the distribution of pay by the authorities, had widened the gap between the rich and the poor, and is therefore seen as unjust. Secondly, the pay the lower ranking policemen gets each month is insufficient due to the high cost of living. Finally, the authorities do not fully appreciate the responsibility of and services given by the lower ranking policemen, especially during the Emergency. Thus, Usman Awang is criticizing a system whereby higher ranking officers are rewarded with better pay while the pay remains the same for the lower ranking policemen. He criticizes the authorities for their injustice and suggests through Ahmad that policemen of the lower ranks should not accept this injustice and take the attitude that their fate is in the hands of others. In other words, he advocates that policemen fight for justice although he does not state what shape the struggle should take.

Usman shows that the poor do not only face unfair treatment in terms of pay, but they also face injustice in terms of treatment by the welfare body and the employer. The poor are always being treated unfairly in the aspect of financial assistance from the welfare body and compensation from employers. Even though the poor people draw the attention of the authorities to their difficult life, no action is taken to help them and if they do help, normally that help comes very slowly. This also happens to factory workers

where their welfare is disregarded by the employers or the government. These problems are expressed by Usman in three short stories: “*Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua*” (The Fate of an Old Mother)³⁴, “*Menentang*” (Resist)³⁵ and “*Sebuah Khemah Didirikan*” (A Tent is Put Up).³⁶

Usman is aware of the existence of the Welfare Department and its role in society. He believes that a welfare body is set up by the State or government of the country with the aim of providing assistance to anyone who is in need, especially the poor. The failure of the welfare body to play its role of social responsibility, is highlighted by Usman in the short story “*Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua*” published on 7 May 1950. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Mak Timah's plight is ignored by the Welfare Department, although she looks forward with anticipation for assistance from it. No staff from the department endeavoured to visit and take care of her. In the end, she passes away and as mentioned by the narrator, it is because for a long time Mak Timah's life was full of distress and she was living in injustice waiting for help from the Welfare Department.

Through the narrator, Usman uses the phrase '*kegelapan hidup yang tak mempunyai keadilan*' which means the darkness of life which has no justice. Here, Usman uses the words '*tak mempunyai keadilan*' to describe that there is injustice in the society being practised by the Welfare Department. Usman seems to query the sense of social responsibility of a welfare body which neglects its responsibility towards the poor people, while preferring to help the rich. Thus, the narrator laments “what is the function of a welfare body that only pays attention to the fate of a group of people who are already leading a luxurious life, rich in money and living happily?”³⁷ Usman uses the words '*hanya mementingkan*' (only pay attention) to describe that the Welfare Department has been biased in terms of treatment. This can be clearly seen from the word '*hanya*' where Usman wants to emphasize that only certain groups get privileges from the Welfare Department. It seems Usman raises a question: why “only” certain groups and not everyone? Through the narrator, Usman queries: “How about the fate of people who are like the betel leaf plant living on rocks?”³⁸ From these statements, to Usman, it is obvious that discrimination has been practised by the Welfare Department, where there is inequality of treatment received by the people; where someone who is already rich continues to receive privileges and assistance from the Welfare Department, but the truly needy are not helped. Here, he give his notion of injustice. Therefore, from the words he uses, his concept of justice as equality in terms of treatment, where the poor should also receive equal treatment and that those who provide services do not '*hanya mementingkan*' certain group of people.

Even though the narrator does not elaborate on the privileges which are received by the rich, from the story one can see the unfairness shown by the Welfare Department

which does not even once give its assistance to Mak Timah when she is ill and in difficulty.³⁹ Up to the time Mak Timah passed away, no assistance was given. As stated by the narrator “hoping for care from the welfare body is futile...”⁴⁰

Usman criticizes the government and the staff of the Welfare Department. To Usman it is meaningless if the Welfare Department set up by the government fails to play its role of helping someone who is in real need, as well as achieve the objective of solving the problem of poverty. Through the character Mak Timah, Usman comments:

If it is true that the welfare body will look after the fate of the common people, then there is no need to hold out the hands like the beggar or to yell out for help, they must surely know, truly understand their role and duty, because she does not live on top of a mountain or at the bottom of the sea, it is only in an ordinary village.⁴¹

It is utterly unjust if the Welfare Department is more concerned to help the rich rather than the poor people. Here again, Usman wants to stress that in the society, there is inequality in the treatment of the poor and the rich, practised by the authorities. Usman seems to question the social system where the rich get better attention from the government than the poor.

Another example of the irresponsibility of the staff of the Welfare Department and its neglect of its social responsibility, can be seen in the short story entitled “*Menentang*” published in May 1951. Mak Limah bemoans her fate after her son, Bedul, is conscripted for the country. She has a difficult life because there is nobody to take care of her. Following the advice of the village people, she goes to the welfare office to ask for assistance. However she is disappointed. But she tries again several times to get help. Finally she receives a letter entitling her to a few ‘*kati*’ of rice, a little sugar and some cooking oil to be used for a month. To get further assistance for the following month, she has to go again to the office, to beg repeatedly. This treatment draws from the narrator the conclusion that Mak Limah is faced with “an unjust society which creates problems for someone who is suffering”.⁴²

In this story, Usman uses the phrase ‘*masyarakat yang tidak adil*’ (an unjust society) to describe iniquities in the social system. The question is why Mak Limah, an old woman, is forced to go (*terpaksa datang*) several times to the welfare office just to get a little of her daily needs? It is extremely unfair if the Welfare Department treats an old mother like a beggar. Here, Usman uses the words ‘*tidak adil*’ to describe the existence of inequality in terms of treatment received by the poor. Usman uses the words ‘*terpaksa datang*’ to show that an old mother has to go to the Welfare Department, instead of the staff of the Welfare Department going to visit her. Thus, to Usman, consideration and a sense of humanity should be shown by the staff of the Welfare Department towards a sick

old woman. The element of injustice is clear here, when the Welfare Department which is set up to help the poor, in fact is only beneficial to the rich people. Here, Usman uses the words '*hanya menyenangkan*' (only benefit) in the phrase "if all that only benefits a group which is already comfortable and rich"⁴³ to demonstrate that there is inequality in terms of treatment received by the poor from the Welfare Department. Again, as can be seen in the previous short story "*Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua*", Usman uses the word '*hanya*' to describe that "only" certain groups get better treatment and privileges from the Welfare Department and not everyone. To Usman, it seems inhumane and irresponsible for the staff of the Welfare Department not to take the initiative to visit Mak Limah when she is sick and furthermore not to readily give assistance. Thus, to Usman it is unjust when the poor '*terpaksa pergi*' to get assistance from Welfare Department, and on the other hand the department '*hanya menyenangkan*' certain groups of people. Thus, from these words, we know Usman's concept of justice as equality in terms of treatment.

As a result of inequality in terms of treatment practised by the Welfare Department towards the poor, Usman criticizes them by saying: "all is useless and meaningless if life and the establishment [of the Welfare Department] cannot secure the life standard of the ordinary people who are poor".⁴⁴ Here we see Usman using direct words '*tidak berguna dan bererti*' (useless and meaningless), to criticize the Welfare Department.

Therefore from both short stories, the concept of justice the author wants to put forward relates to values of fairness, compassion and equality. Thus, the Welfare Department which is set up by the government to help someone in need should carry out its responsibility efficiently and fairly. Besides, as a department whose concern is the welfare of the people, fair and equal treatment should be given to the people without consideration of status, wealth and power of a person. Once equality is implemented, dissatisfaction in the society is likely to be reduced.

The short story "*Sebuah Khemah Didirikan*" published in 1963, is more about demands for fair and just treatment than for equality. In this story, the narrator portrays *Utusan Melayu*'s employer who provides an inadequate procedure to give compensation to his workers who are injured. Lim who loses two fingers and Rosdi who loses his thumb while working with a machine, do not receive any compensation from the employer. Instead their services are terminated. As a result, the workers of *Utusan Melayu* go on strike and protest on behalf of their two friends.

Through the leader of the protest, Usman voices his dissatisfaction towards the employer by saying:

Now, we are not demanding a cent or two from the huge profit the company has made, but actually we demand justice...and it is justice we

are fighting for now...The employer only pats our shoulder when we are injured and sends flowers to us in hospital. That is all, friends, that is all.⁴⁵

The words '*itu saja*' (that is all) describe the unfair treatment the workers receive from their employer. Again, when the workers are asked to stop the strike by the police, some of them ignore the order by saying "Let the employer himself chase us away. Remember, we demand justice. Is this the justice we get?"⁴⁶ In the story, the following phrases are used in relation to the word justice, namely: '*menuntut keadilan*' (to demand justice); '*untuk keadilan*' (for justice) and '*beginikah keadilan*' (is this justice?). The phrase '*menuntut keadilan*' emphasizes and implies the right to receive what one believes as one's lawful rights. In the phrase '*untuk keadilan*' the word '*untuk*' implies a situation of doing something for the sake of or in the interest of justice, in order to receive that justice. From the story, the reason the employees decide to go on strike is because they want just treatment from their employer, to which they are entitled. In the third phrase '*beginikah keadilan*', the employees are questioning whether there is any justice if after two of the workers are injured, they merely receive flowers and not monetary compensation and are then promptly sacked. Finally, '*beginikah keadilan*' implies a state of dissatisfaction and the act of questioning the justness of a situation or condition. Usman uses the words '*menuntut*', '*untuk*' and '*beginikah*' before the word '*keadilan*' in regard to unfair treatment received by the workers from their employer. This describes his concept of justice as fair treatment which can be seen further in the following argument.

Usman holds the view that employees should have certain rights and entitlements and expects the employer to honour them. Through the workers' leader, Usman expresses his anger:

The employer has played around with us. Friends, our demand has been largely ignored... and not only that, not only that friends, the employer has not only rejected our demand outright but has also shown his iron-fisted attitude with sacking two of our friends.⁴⁷

Usman uses the words '*mempermain-mainkan*' (played around), '*dianggap sepi*' (ignored), '*menolak*' (rejected) and '*kuku besinya*' (his iron-fist) to describe his concept of injustice. Usman uses the word '*mempermain-mainkan*' to demonstrate that the workers are being deceived by the employer. In other words, Usman wants to show that the employer is not serious concerning the welfare of the workers. This assertion is followed by the words '*dianggap sepi*' which Usman uses to show that the employer has done nothing to fulfil the demands of the worker. Furthermore, when the employer '*menolak*' the workers' demand, this shows that he is not concerned with helping the workers. The words '*kuku besinya*' shows that the employer has an autocratic attitude.

Usman wants to describe that the employees are not getting fair and just treatment from the employer. In other words, injustice is taking place.

This can be seen further when two of the workers, Lim and Rosdi are injured while working. Usman uses the word '*hanya*' (only) and '*itu saja*' (only that) in the phrase "The employer only pats us on the shoulder when we are injured and sends flowers to the hospital. Only that, friends, only that".⁴⁸ From the words '*hanya*' and '*itu saja*' one gets the idea that the attention they receive from the employer does not extend beyond a little sympathetic pat on the shoulder and a bunch of flowers. Thus the compensation is a cheap one for the employer. Usman wants to highlight that it is unfair if injured workers merely receive flowers. Therefore, to Usman the concept of justice in terms of treatment is not to '*mempermain-mainkan*', '*anggap sepi*' or '*menolak*'. Neither is it to adopt a '*kuku besi*' approach and to '*hanya*' (only) pat on the worker's shoulder when he is injured. The words '*itu saja*' (that's all) express, the dissatisfaction of the workers at the lack of concern of the employer for the welfare of the employees.

Usman sees the actions of the employer as oppressive and exploitative and merely concerned with making profits. Through several characters, Usman advocates rebellion: '*Hancurkan penindasan*' (crush oppression). The workers' appalling work conditions are captured in the following words: '*Kita mampus macam katak. Kita kerja macam lembu*' (We die like frogs. We work like cows) and '*Majikan kepala batu*' (Rock headed boss). Usman uses strong words to criticize the employer such as '*hancurkan*' and likens the workers to '*katak*' and '*lembu*' to stress that the employer has dehumanised them and stripped them of their dignity. Here, Usman describes the conditions of the workers, that they are being overworked and sacrificed, yet their hard work is not appreciated. The word '*mampus*' is a crass and impolite term for "die". To die like a frog is to die pointlessly and without dignity. The employer on the other hand, is called '*kepala batu*' to show his hardness and autocratic manner.

In summing up, in the short story "*Surat dari Seorang Mata-mata*", Usman is concerned with the unfair treatment faced by the lower ranking policemen. While in the other two short stories, "*Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua*" and "*Menentang*", Usman is concerned with the unfair treatment faced by the poor from the Welfare Department. Finally, in "*Sebuah Khemah Didirikan*" Usman exposes the ill-treatment of employees by an employer. Usman shows that both the public and the private sectors are equally guilty of being unjust.

From the words Usman uses to describe his concept of justice as equality and fairness in terms of treatment, we can see several changes. For instance in "*Surat dari Seorang Mata-mata*" (1950), Usman uses the words '*tidak juga berubah*', to show that

the situation had not changed for policemen to alleviate their hardship. He does not use the words '*tidak adil*'. However in later short stories such as "*Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua*" (1950) Usman begins to use the words '*tidak mempunyai keadilan*' and '*hanya mementingkan*' to indicate lack of justice and discrimination. In "*Menentang*" (1951) he uses the words '*tidak adil*', '*terpaksa datang*' and '*hanya menyenangkan*'. Meanwhile in "*Sebuah Khemah Didirikan*" (1963), he uses '*menuntut keadilan*', '*untuk keadilan*', '*beginikah keadilan*', '*mempermain-mainkan*', '*dianggap sepi*', '*menolak*' and '*kuku besinya*'.

In "*Surat dari Seorang Mata-mata*", "*Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua*" and "*Menentang*", Usman uses polite words when criticizing the unjust Welfare Department. For instance, in "*Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua*" he uses the sentence '*kegelapan hidup yang tidak mempunyai keadilan*' (the darkness of a life which has no justice). In "*Menentang*" he uses the sentence '*Masyarakat yang tidak adil menimbulkan keburukan pada orang yang sengsara*' (An unjust society creates ugliness [problems] for people who are suffering). However, in "*Sebuah Khemah Didirikan*", Usman uses strong and bold words to show his protest such as '*Kita sebenarnya menuntut keadilan...dan untuk keadilanlah yang kita perjuangkan sekarang ini*' (Actually we demand justice... and it is justice we are fighting for now), '*Ingat, kita menuntut keadilan. Beginikah keadilan yang kita dapati?*' (Remember, we demand justice. Is this the justice we get?) and '*Hancurkan penindasan*' (demolish oppression). He even insults the employer by calling him '*Majikan kepala batu*' (Rock headed boss). Usman shows realism in the context of protesting for justice especially during a strike, when voices of anger from the strikers are inevitably heard.

In "*Sebuah Khemah Didirikan*", Usman discusses the steps to be taken by the employer in giving compensation to the injured workers but in "*Surat dari Seorang Mata-mata*", "*Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua*" and "*Menentang*" he is more concerned with the social system where the rich are given privileges and the poor are neglected or even ignored. In these three short stories, Usman seems to draw attention to the need for social equality and fairness. However from all the stories, Usman stresses that individuals have the right to demand better treatment not only from the authorities, Welfare Department or employer but also from the rich. Social equality in terms of status is another aspect with which Usman is concerned.

ii. Equality in Terms of Status

Social stratification or a society based on hierarchy, has tended to favour the more privileged at the expense of those at the bottom of the social ladder. The Malay traditional system is hierarchical in nature. During the Melaka Sultanate in the 15th century, the

highest position in the social hierarchy was that of the Sultan, followed by the aristocratic groups and finally the masses. As noted by Shaharuddin Maaruf, an academic of Malay Studies, Malay feudal society was very conscious of status and hierarchy. Man's superiority and inferiority was constantly emphasized. This was reflected in many areas of life. Certain terms of deference, for instance, were used only when interacting with the nobles. For instance, '*Tuanku*' (Your Highness) to address the ruler and '*patik*' (your humble servant) was used to address the commoner. By means of such terms, people acknowledged their different status within the rigid feudal hierarchy. The introduction of such class elements in language contributed further to social inequality. Even the *Sejarah Melayu* records Sultan Muhammad as a great innovator for being the first to forbid the use of yellow by commoners and making it exclusive for royalty and their close relations.⁴⁹

This social inequality influenced the elite and the rich groups, and continues to exist, despite some erosion, within Malay society even today. In the 1950s, when Usman wrote many of his short stories, traditional Malay values had not yet been significantly eroded. In that period the Malay elite were extremely conscious of their descent, status and wealth and demanded that they be treated with great respect. Usman made the following observation on the matter: "in this country there are still people who consider themselves special...and live in wealth".⁵⁰ His awareness of this problem is depicted in four short stories referred to below in which justice in terms of status forms an important theme. These are "*Untuk Jadi Isteri Orang Bangsawan*" (To Be a Nobleman's Wife)⁵¹, "*Manusia dan Hidup*" (Mankind and Life)⁵², "*Surat dari Seorang Teman*" (A Letter from a Friend)⁵³ and "*Kejadian di Kampung*" (Incident in a Village)⁵⁴. All these short stories portray the wide gap between the rich and the poor and the rich are described as being more influential and respected by the society compared to the poor.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the short story "*Untuk Jadi Isteri Orang Bangsawan*" which was published on 17 September 1950, portrays '*aku*', the main character of the story, who is disappointed after his lover, Salmiah, an educated girl, is betrothed by her mother to a person with an aristocratic background, even though '*aku*' and his lover have known each other since they were children. Salmiah's mother chooses the nobleman to be her son-in-law because he is rich and influential. '*Aku*' on the other hand, is just a clerk with a small income. Therefore, for the break up of their relationship, '*aku*' blames the nobleman, Salmiah's parent and society. He knows that the nobleman's wealth gives him the advantage on the question of marriage. '*Aku*' criticizes Salmiah's mother because her materialism leads her to choose someone who is wealthy to be her son-in-law. '*Aku*' criticizes the society for giving more respect to people with wealth and status. Therefore, what happened to him is represented as an oppression by the rich towards the poor.

Usman uses several words to differentiate between the rich and the poor and describe his concept of justice. The rich are termed as '*golongan bangsawan*' (noble group) while the poor described as '*orang yang tidak berbangsa*' (people without race). Usman uses the words '*bangsawan*' and '*tidak berbangsa*' to show the different status between the rich and the poor. Note that these are proper Malay terms which are used appropriately by Usman. If these terms are read literally they imply that the upper classes are people who belong to a group or race, while the poor do not belong to any group or race. The rich therefore see themselves as the core group, while the poor are seen as marginal or even outsiders. It is Usman's intention to show that this marginalisation of the poor exposes them to social injustice.

Usman also likens the rich as people who '*melayang-layang terbang di angkasa*' (flying freely in the air) while the poor '*merayap-rayap saja di bumi*' (creep around on the earth). As mentioned in Chapter 3, what is implied here is that the place of the rich is very high up on a vertical scale, while the poor are right at the bottom. But it is not just a matter of the contrasting position that creates the problems for the poor. The attitudes of the rich are far more damaging. As discussed in Chapter 3, the poor are looked down upon by the rich. They are in fact regarded, at best, as a different kind of human beings and at worst, as animals or even rubbish (*sampah yang menyemakkan masyarakat*). To Usman, this low opinion of the poor as well as the desire to keep them at a distance, lies at the core of their oppression and humiliation. Equality of status is therefore integral to his concept of justice. As he emphasised in this story, the poor are also human (*mereka semua manusia juga seperti orang-orang bangsawan*) and that "they know pain, know difficulty and know hunger and (they) possess human characteristics" (*Mereka tau sakit, tau susah dan tau lapar dan ada mempunyai sifat-sifat kemanusiaan*).

Usman regards the rich as people who are being given '*kelebihan dan kesenangan*' (extra [privileges] and comfort) while the poor are '*golongan yang tidak bernasib baik*' (an unlucky group of people). Usman uses the words '*kelebihan dan kesenangan*' and '*tidak bernasib baik*' to show the contrasting life experience between the rich and the poor. Thus, all the above words used by Usman in the story, describe that there is inequality in terms of status between the rich and the poor. This reflects his notion of justice as equality in terms of status, where there should not be two groups of people, one high and the other low, one living happily and the other creeping around, one lucky and the other unlucky.

In this story, '*aku*' is portrayed as angry but sees that it is futile to fight against the existing value system. He says that he will not demand "true democracy, same level, same taste" ('*demokrasi tulin*', *sama rata sama rasa*) because many people before him have tried to fight to solve this problem but have failed.⁵⁵ Thus Usman, through '*aku*',

admits that the traditional value system is extremely resistant to change and no doubt, like 'aku', he is very angry about it. Nevertheless, he hopes for some change even if it is not a complete one. It is interesting that the narrator uses the phrase '*demokrasi tulin*' (true democracy) and assumes it to be similar to '*sama rata sama rasa*' (same level, same taste). Thus, 'aku' longs for a truly egalitarian society where people share the same values. This again, describe Usman's concept of justice.

Usman's concept of justice can be clearly seen in the story when he urges society to '*duduk sama rendah, berdiri sama tinggi*' (sit at the same low level and stand at the same height). His idea is that there should be no gap between the rich and the poor. One group should not be higher than the other. They should be equal in status. This relates to his idea of equality in society, which reflects his concept of justice.

The story also draws attention to the fact that the poor who have a lower status have little freedom in life, as the rich directly or indirectly oppress them. Thus, Usman conveys the idea of the absence of social justice in a stratified society, where the value system favours the upper classes and the rich. To Usman, this should not happen. Justice can only occur when there is equality in society. Society should respect someone not because of his wealth or influence but because of his kindness, honesty and sense of responsibility.

Talking about social injustice in Malaysia, academic and human right's activist, Chandra Muzaffar, stated that one of the elements of injustice occurs when a marginal group of people cannot enjoy the product of the development of the country. With the little pay they receive, this group of people has to struggle to live. They have a difficult life and to buy a house was out of the question.⁵⁶ However, long before Chandra presented his view, Usman had raised the problem of housing among the poor in the story "*Manusia dan Hidup*" published on 10 June 1951.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the story is about an office boy, Jaafar, who with his wife, Munah, wants to buy a house but cannot afford it. In order to buy a house provided by the government, for which he is eligible, he has to come up with some money to pay the '*duit kopi*' (coffee-money) or bribe. This is difficult for him to do, for he does not earn enough to put money aside. Thus, although the Government provides houses, only people who are rich can afford to buy them. Through the character Munah, Usman exposes the injustice suffered by the poor:

Her mind wandered thinking of life's suffering caused by a society that is lame and unjust.⁵⁷

To Usman, a society that is unjust is lame or crippled (*pincang*). Here, he conjures up the image of unevenness of the steps taken by a lame person. The words '*tak adil*' (unjust) is used by the narrator at the end of the story to describe the unjust structure of society (*susunan masyarakat yang pincang dan tak adil*). The word '*susunan*' comes from the root word '*susun*', which means arrange. Thus, Usman talks about the way society is arranged, implying that it is stratified and expressing that this stratification is not normal and therefore not just.

Usman expresses his sympathy for the poor who are the victims of social injustice. Through the character Jaafar, Usman shows his concern:

Today, the people who are poor such as we who live in the city or our father who live in the village have become even lower and fallen in our standard of living. Our energy and poverty has become a tool and a sacrificial offering for a group of people who are comfortable and rich.⁵⁸

From the above phrase there are two groups: '*rakyat yang miskin*' (poor people) and '*golongan manusia yang senang dan mewah*' (the comfortable and rich group of people). Further, Usman uses the words '*rakyat*' for the poor and '*golongan manusia*' (a group of people) to refer to the rich, in order to emphasise the many or majority as opposed to the few or minority, respectively. Further, as described by Usman the poor's standard of living has become lower because they are the victims of the rich. Usman uses the word '*korban*' again to show victimization. Further, he uses the phrase '*tanah tempat mereka memijak*' (the earth which they step on) to show that the poor are being trampled by the rich. The words '*mereka memijak*' reflect there is a group of people who is arrogant and egoistical who walk all over the poor. Thus, from the words he uses above, we can understand Usman's concept of justice as equality in terms of status, where the poor are regarded by the rich as '*tanah tempat mereka memijak*'.

Rather similar to "*Untuk Jadi Isteri Orang Bangsawan*" is the short story entitled "*Surat dari Seorang Teman*" published in November 1951 which is about the drawing power of money and position. In this story a man in prison writes a letter to the narrator expressing his disappointment at the negative values held by society where wealth and status play important roles in influencing people. The story begins:

Friends: So long as human beings continue to struggle for the influence of money and high status, the value of love's purity and a just existence will not be guaranteed.

'*Saudara: Selagi pengaruh wang dan kebesaran masih menjadi rebutan nafsu manusia mendapatinya selama itu pula harga kesucian cinta dan keadilan hidup tak akan terjamin*'.⁵⁹

As '*saya*' is poor and cannot afford to buy food for his family and jewellery for his wife, his heart '*telah menjadi kasar, gelap dan buta, dan hilanglah segala kesucian*' (becomes crude, dark and blind, and all purity vanishes). Thus, he finds himself in prison. Even though the narrator does not say why '*saya*' is in prison, one could assume from his confession that his heart had changed and that he had committed a crime. Nevertheless, '*saya*' blames the values of society for his predicament for he says money and status continue to play important roles in society. Here, Usman emphasizes the influence of the environment on human behaviour, suggesting that the pursuit of wealth and status encouraged by society can even drive a man to commit a crime.

In this short story, Usman's moral position is made clear through three aspects of '*keadilan*' mentioned by the narrator. These are '*keadilan hidup*' (just life); '*perasaan keadilan*' (sense of justice) and '*keadilan sosial*' (social justice). The term '*keadilan hidup*' is used in the context of wanting to see a way of life where money and status do not play important roles in influencing people. '*Perasaan keadilan*' relates to a sense of justice in the community. Usman appears to believe that if someone has a sense of justice, he or she will at least not use money or status to influence others. Lastly, he sees that '*keadilan sosial*' will be achieved when there is equality in society.

At the end of the story, through the narrator, Usman criticizes society for being divided into classes, namely, an upper and lower class (*masyarakat yang bertinggi rendah*), and hopes for social justice (*keadilan sosial*) where equality prevails for all. In the phrase: '*meruntuhkan susunan masyarakat yang bertinggi rendah*' (to demolish the social stratification in society), Usman uses the words '*bertinggi rendah*' to show that in society there exist two groups of people: the rich in the higher strata and the poor in the lower strata. Usman wants to highlight that there is inequality in terms of position and status in society. This could be related to the early phrase in the story, "so long as human beings continue to struggle for the influence of money and high status, the value of love's purity and just existence will not be guaranteed". Usman makes it clear that he rejects the merits of a stratified society and wants a complete overhaul of the Malay social system. Here, from the words he uses in the story, we can describe his concept of justice as equality in terms of status.

In another short story Usman's concept of justice in terms of status can be seen in "*Kejadian di Kampung*" which was published on 23 December 1951. This story is concerned with the status gap between the lower and the upper classes. The lower class is represented by Hamid, his family and Gayah. The upper class is represented by Ali, a government official. Hamid, a paddy planter, was at one time a factory worker who worked hard to make the company prosper. Unfortunately, he and a few other workers had their services terminated by their employer because the company had suffered a loss.

Hamid then joins the "Special Police Constable" (SC) to guard an estate. However, later he is asked to resign because he is accused of being stubborn and always making trouble in the estate. While in the village, Hamid falls in love with Gayah. Unfortunately, Gayah's parents had arranged her marriage to Encik Ali who owns a car. By marrying Gayah to Ali, Gayah's family hopes to pay off their debts. Even though Encik Ali is regarded as an arrogant person the village people still respect him because of his wealth and status.

At first Gayah disagrees with her parents' choice but she later agrees to marry a rich man after being advised by Hamid. Hamid says :

Please follow your parents' wishes. This means you will be paying back for your mother's milk and your father's sweat in looking after and bringing you up. We, the poor will always be trampled on by people high up who are rich and comfortable. Among human beings, it is difficult to find justice because justice only comes from the feeling of consideration for others, but people who are comfortable always look for the opportunity to step on and control poor people like us.⁶⁰

Here, Usman clearly shows a lack of faith in the willingness of the rich to help the poor or to even consider their feelings. On the contrary, the rich would take any opportunity to trample on the poor. In other words, to Usman the rich will always take advantage of the poor. Thus, he uses the sentence '*yang miskin-miskin ini memang selalu menjadi tempat berpijak orang-orang yang mewah dan senang*' (the poor will always be trampled on by people high up who are rich and comfortable).

Usman uses the words '*tempat berpijak*' in the same way he uses the words '*mereka memijak*' in "*Untuk Jadi Isteri Orang Bangsawan*" to emphasise that the poor are down-trodden and oppressed. In fact Usman asserts that the rich look for ways and opportunities to step on and control the poor. This can be seen from the following phrase: '*orang senang memang selalu mencari kesempatan memijak dan menguasai orang-orang miskin*' (the comfortable people will always take opportunity to trample and control the poor). Nevertheless, despite their bad behaviour, the rich are always respected (*hormat*) by the people. Here, Usman conceptualises injustice as inequality in terms of status which encourages oppression.

Through the narrator, Usman criticizes the rich (Encik Ali), regarding him as an "arrogant person" (*orang yang sombong*). When Encik Ali sees himself as more superior to the villagers the narrator regards him as "God's slave (creature) who is most hated in this world" (*hamba Tuhan yang paling dibenci di dalam dunia ini*). The terms '*sombong*' and '*dibenci*' used by Usman, serve to show the depth of his hatred of the rich.

In the above short stories, through the narrators and characters, Usman castigates the rich. In *"Untuk Jadi Isteri Orang Bangsawan"*, *"Manusia dan Hidup"* and *"Surat dari Seorang Teman"*, Usman uses indirect words to criticize them. For instance in *"Untuk Jadi Isteri Orang Bangsawan"* through 'aku', a poor person, he says: '*Aku yang tidak berbangsa dan berhidung tinggi*' (I don't have status and a high nose) which refers to the rich as being status conscious and holding their noses high. In *"Manusia dan Hidup"* Usman describes the poor being oppressed by a swindler - '*lintah darat*' (a land leech or a blood sucker). In a later short story *"Kejadian di Kampung"*, Usman's criticism becomes more direct and open in the way he criticises the rich, calling them '*orang yang sombong*' and '*hamba Tuhan yang paling dibenci di dalam dunia ini*'. His hatred is palpable and he no longer disguises his opinions.

Usman uses the words '*demokrasi tulin, sama rata sama rasa*' in *"Untuk Jadi Isteri Orang Bangsawan"* to refer to equality but in later short stories he uses the word '*keadilan*' such as '*keadilan hidup*', '*perasaan keadilan*' and '*keadilan sosial*' to describe his idea of justice. It would seem that Usman believes that the ideal system for a society is a true democracy where egalitarianism prevails and where the essence of this democracy is justice. Thus, there is a clear progression in his critical thinking, in which he sees that the "lame" and sick Malayan society is in need of change. Usman believes that this change has to go in the direction of a true democracy for only then will the emergence of a just society be ensured. His use of the term '*terjamin*' (guaranteed) in the phrase '*keadilan hidup tidak akan terjamin*' quoted earlier, could be seen as a statement of Usman's refusal to accept anything less than a guaranteed or secure just society.

iii. Equality in Terms of Legality

The existence of just laws to encourage and nurture a greater appreciation and sense of justice forms another theme in Usman's short stories. This can be seen in three of his short stories which depict legal injustice. The first short story is entitled "*Aturan-Kodi...?*" (Useless Procedure)⁶¹, the second is a short story entitled "*Menyambung Kisah yang Tetap Hidup*" (To Continue a Lively Story)⁶² and the third "*Tugas*" (Duty).⁶³

Divorce and polygamy are two main issues put forward by Usman in the short stories: "*Aturan-Kodi...?*" published on 6 February 1955 and "*Menyambung Kisah yang Tetap Hidup*" published on 24 July 1955. The short story "*Aturan-Kodi...?*" portrays a woman who disagrees with the way the Islamic marriage law is implemented, where it gives the husband the right to divorce his wife and to practise polygamy as he likes. As a woman, she feels the system is unjust because a woman is not given the right to prevent her husband from taking such actions. The woman suggests that any case concerning

divorce or polygamy, should be brought to the court for trial. Then the court will decide whether the husband should be allowed to divorce his wife and marry another. The narrator expresses his sympathy for a woman being divorced by her husband, without being given her right to a court hearing. The narrator questions the unjust laws regarding divorce.

That the woman in the story is disappointed with the legal system can be seen from several phrases being used. For instance, the woman queries whether or not the husband has the right to divorce his wife on the smallest pretext, while the wife has no right to say anything. She questions; '*adilkah aturan ini?*' (Is it justice this procedure?). She then blames this because '*aturan-aturan yang longgar menguntungkan suatu pihak*' (rules that are loose benefit one party only)

Usman uses the words '*menguntungkan suatu pihak*' to describe that there is injustice being practised in the application of the law, where it gives benefit to one group and not to the other. This amounts to the latter group being at the losing end of any decision made in accordance with the law in question. This is unjust. Thus, Usman questions: '*adilkah aturan ini?*'. Therefore Usman proposes that to solve the problem of divorce, the husband and wife must be '*dibicarakan di mahkamah*' (tried in court). It is therefore not the law that Usman opposes, for the fact that a trial in court is suggested in the words '*dibicarakan di mahkamah*' shows that he remains confident in the fairness of the rule of law. What he questions is its implementation for here he sees that some laws are applied to '*menguntungkan*' (benefit) one group at the expense of another. When this happens, then there is inequality in terms of the application of the law. The words '*dibicarakan di mahkamah*' describe Usman's notion of justice as equality in terms of legality.

"*Menyambung Kisah yang Tetap Hidup*", a similar story as "*Aturan-Kodi....?*" is concerned with the unjust way Islamic marriage law is implemented. However in this story the character Jamilah is not happy with the system because when her husband takes a second wife she is divorced on a small excuse, after she has delivered a baby. She recounts her past experiences to a man while they are having a meal at a stall. In the story, Jamilah queries the way the marriage law is implemented: "Why is there no justice in this matter? If the marriage law is just, the husband could not divorce his wife without his wife's consent and the husband would not be allowed to marry more than one wife".⁶⁴ More questioning along similar lines can be seen when Jamilah expresses her disappointment by saying "I am one of the wives who has become a victim of this unjust law"⁶⁵ and "Sir, do you know how many thousands or more wives will become the victim of this unjust law?"⁶⁶ Later at the end of the story, she states "Sir, you do not

know about us, women who become victims of the marriage law which is unjust to women".⁶⁷

Through the character, Usman clearly states that the marriage law is only beneficial to the husband: '*undang-undang kahwin hanya memberatkan dan memihak pada lelaki atau suami sahaja*' (the marriage law is weighted in favour of and sides with the men or husbands). Here, Usman uses the words '*hanya memberatkan*' and '*memihak*' to show that the marriage law is biased. In this story he goes beyond saying that the application of the Muslim Marriage and Divorce laws are unjust, for he clearly states that the laws themselves are unfair. This can be seen from the phrase '*undang-undang yang tak adil*' (unjust law). In this story, Usman proposes to tighten the law and that a special court be set up where the question of divorce could be solved: '*Ketatkan undang-undang ini dan adakan mahkamah penyiasatan mengenai soal nikah kahwin*' (Tighten the law and set up a court of investigation in regard to the question of marriage).

Once again, Usman shows his confidence in the '*mahkamah*' (court) to resolve questions of law in a fair and just manner. Usman uses the word '*mahkamah*' to describe his idea of justice as equality in terms of legality. It seems that to Usman a special court is essential to solve the problem of divorce so that the marriage law will not '*hanya memberatkan*' and '*memihak*' (favour) to the husband.

From these two short stories, Usman seems to sympathize with women who become victims of husbands, who take advantage of an unjust system which does not require wives to give their consent to husbands who want to practise polygamy. For instance, in "*Aturan-Kodi...?*", Usman, through the narrator, comments: "what is wrong and what is very frightening is that people abuse a belief or religion merely for their self-interest, for self-gratification".⁶⁸ In "*Menyambung Kisah yang Tetap Hidup*", Usman expresses criticism through his question: '*Mengapa dalam hal ini tak ada keadilan?*' (Why in this matter there is no justice?) and his statement: '*jadi korban undang-undang yang tak adil*' (become a victim of a law that is unjust). In the words '*salahnya and tertakutnya*' is expressed Usman's opinion that it is wrong and very frightening if laws can be easily abused. For him, the way to ensure that this abuse does not easily happen is to use the courts to decide on matters of law.

Through the dissatisfaction shown by the female characters in the above short stories, Usman highlights the issue of the interpretation of Islamic marriage laws. Men, in general have tended to overlook some of the more important conditions set out by the laws such as a man being permitted to have four wives at any one time, provided he is able to treat his wives with equity.⁶⁹ The question naturally arises as to whether a man who wants to practise polygamy can treat all his wives equally? Another aspect which

shows the shallowness of the understanding of the Islamic Law is that although divorce is permitted, it is not encouraged and, in religious theory, at least, it is frowned upon.⁷⁰ Therefore, as pointed out by Usman through the female characters in his stories, it is unfair if the husband arbitrarily divorces his wife without understanding the true spirit of the Islamic Law.

It may be noted that in regard to Usman's criticism of the Muslim marriage law he was ahead of his time. Not only did he realize that this system only benefitted husbands and gave little protection to wives but he also voiced his opposition to it. Usman appears to favour a system which gives a wife the right to withhold her consent if her husband desires to take another wife. In the two stories discussed above, it seems obvious that Usman was aware that it was not only in the application of the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Laws that the injustice occurred, although he tended to emphasise that aspect of it. He was equally alert to the fact that there were loopholes in the laws, which opened them to abuse although his criticism of this was rather muted. Usman was not so foolhardy as to challenge the religious authorities, but he nevertheless was brave enough to express his opinion openly. It may also be noted that it has taken a long time for the relevant authorities to act to cover the loopholes in the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Laws which have for long allowed men to abuse their rights in marriage. Even today, only a few states in Malaysia have taken measures to partially protect the rights of women in marriage.

The story "*Tugas*" published in 1962, on the other hand, is about a policeman, nicknamed Jid who carries out his duties strictly in accordance with the regulations. In front of a cinema, he sees a big and beautiful new car parked in a prohibited area. When the owner of the car, a rich Chinese man, arrives, Jid begins to issue a summons. But the car owner angrily tells him that he will report this matter to the English O.C.P.D. (Officer in Charge of a Police District) because he knows him very well. However, Jid still issues the summons because he holds the principle that he will do his duty and what he does is according to the law. He still remembers his law teacher's statement, while in police training that one should obey the law.

There is a phrase used by Usman to describe his concept of justice. This phrase is used in the story when Jid remembers his law teacher's statement that "the law does not know who you are. It does not discriminate between friend or relative. Even though your parents do wrong they should be caught".⁷¹ Usman uses the phrase: '*tak pilih kasih, tak pilih sahabat atau saudara*' (does not discriminate between a lover, friend or relative) to describe that the law should be just. Even though the word '*keadilan*' is not used here, the phrase refers to a concept of justice because it relates to the absence of discrimination. In other words, the law should apply to anybody without consideration of relationship,

status, rank, family and so on. However, only later in the story, the word '*keadilan*' is used when the narrator mentions that "...whether you are right or wrong in the courts, rests with the judgement of the magistrate or umpire".⁷² There are several words which are interesting in the phrase. These are '*keadilan*' (justice); '*salah dan benar*' (right or wrong); '*timbangan*' (judgement) and '*hakim*' (magistrate) and '*pengadil*' (umpire). '*Pengadil*' is someone who acts as a judge either in the court or an umpire in competitions such as soccer.⁷³ A person who applies the rules, that is the magistrate and the umpire will do the '*timbangan*', arbitration, judgement, determining whether someone has done right or wrong. And this is the important function of the court, to build justice. All these words are used by Usman to describe his idea of justice as equality in terms of legality.

In the story Usman criticizes the rich Chinese man for not understanding the law. On the other hand, he praises the policeman for obeying the law when the English O.C.P.D. meets the policeman and praises him for doing the right thing:

I like your good work. You follow the law. I know the bussinessman. He has made a report to me that you have issued him a summons. But you are right. Good. I want policemen to follow (the rules in doing) their duty.⁷⁴

Although the first two stories are more concerned about the application of a religious law, namely, the Islamic Law regarding divorce and polygamy and "*Tugas*" is about the application of a civil law, all three short stories focus on legal justice. However, in "*Aturan-Kodi...?*" and "*Menyambung Kisah yang Tetap Hidup*", Usman advocates that changes be made to the marriage legal system, so that a wife will not become the victim of her husband. In other words, a wife should have rights on the issue of divorce and polygamy. On the other hand, in "*Tugas*", Usman wants to stress that rules should be strictly enforced if they lead to justice. Usman shows that laws can be flawed or misused in which case they must be revised. At the same time the sanctity of the law must be preserved if it is to ensure that justice prevails. Here Usman sees justice as recognizing neither wealth, status nor friendship.

Conclusion

Usman's concept of justice as equality of treatment, status and in law can clearly be seen from the words he uses in his short stories such as '*tidak lebih maka tidak juga kurang*', '*hanya mementingkan*', '*kuku besinya*', '*demokrasi tulin, sama rata sama rasa*', '*duduk sama rendah, berdiri sama tinggi*', '*susunan masyarakat yang pincang dan tak adil*', '*masyarakat yang bertinggi rendah*', '*menguntungkan suatu pihak*', '*mahkamah*', '*tak pilih kasih, tak pilih sahabat atau saudara*', '*salah dan benar*', '*timbangan*', '*hakim*' and '*pengadil*'.

However, the idea of justice in Usman's short stories centres on the term '*adil*' whether merely inferred or openly expressed. There are some short stories in which the words '*keadilan*' or '*ketidakadilan*' do not appear. This can be seen in the short story entitled "*Surat dari Seorang Mata-mata*" and "*Untuk Jadi Isteri Orang Bangsawan*". Both were published in 1950. The absence of those words in the first short story could be due to Usman's career as a policeman. He would not have dared to criticize the authorities directly. However, there is a significant development in the second short story and even though the above words are not used, the author introduces the phrase '*demokrasi tulin, sama rata sama rasa*'.

What could be said here is that there is some development towards the words used by Usman in his short stories in relation to his concept of justice as equality. For instance, in "*Surat dari Seorang Mata-mata*" (1950) we can see Usman uses the words '*tidak lebih maka tidak pula kurang*' instead of the word '*adil*'. The absence of the word '*adil*' in "*Surat dari Seorang Mata-mata*", is followed by creating a new term '*demokrasi tulin, sama rata sama rasa*' in "*Untuk Jadi Isteri Orang Bangsawan*" (1950). This is in turn followed by the words '*keadilan hidup*', '*perasaan keadilan*' and '*keadilan sosial*' in "*Surat dari Seorang Teman*" (1951). Then in "*Aturan-Kodi...?*" (1955) and "*Menyambung Kisah yang Tetap Hidup*" (1955) we can see Usman uses the word '*mahkamah*'. Finally in "*Tugas*" (1963), Usman began to use the words '*tak pilih kasih*', '*tak pilih sahabat atau saudara*', '*timbangan*', '*hakim*', '*pengadil*' and '*salah dan benar*' to describe his notion of justice as equality. This shows the development in the maturity of the writer, Usman Awang as a critical thinker.

The issues raised by Usman, relate to his own experience and the evolving social environment in the country. He begins with injustice in terms of pay received in "*Surat dari Seorang Mata-mata*" which is based on his experience while he was in the police force between 1947 and 1952. Then he takes up the theme of unjust treatment from the Welfare Department such as in "*Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua*", "*Menentang*" and injustice because of status differences such as in "*Untuk Jadi Isteri Orang Bangsawan*"; "*Manusia dan Hidup*" and "*Surat dari Seorang Teman*" which were dominant issues in society in early 1950s where the poor were being neglected by the Welfare Department and there was social inequality. However in 1955, Usman addresses a different issue, that is injustice as seen in the implementation of Islamic marriage laws which could be found in "*Aturan-Kodi...?*" and "*Menyambung Kisah yang Tetap Hidup*". In 1962 through the short story entitled "*Tugas*", the author puts forward the issue of justice in law while through the short story "*Sebuah Khemah Didirikan*", the author raises the issue of the struggle for justice from the employer. The issue in "*Sebuah Khemah Didirikan*" is based on Usman's experience while he was with *Utusan Melayu* in 1961.

Thus, we can see that in the early 1950s, Usman was concerned with the general issue of social inequality between the rich and the poor but after 1955, Usman began to concern himself with specific issues such as Islamic marriage law, applying civil law to society and justice in employer-employee relations. This progression from the general to the more specific shows not only the broadening of his knowledge of development in his society, and the realization that injustice was quite widespread but also indicates what appears to be Usman's resolve to expose all forms of injustice in the country.

Usman criticizes all forms of injustice if he believes the system only benefits one group. Thus, we can see Usman using several approaches to criticize them. For instance he raises questions such as '*adilkah?*', '*bagaimana nasib....?*' and '*beginikah keadilan?*'. Usman also uses direct criticisms such as '*masyarakat yang tidak adil*', '*tidak berguna dan bererti*', '*hancurkan penindasan*', '*Kita mampus macam katak*', '*Kita kerja macam lembu*', '*orang yang sombong*', '*hamba Tuhan yang paling dibenci*' and '*undang-undang yang tak adil*' and he uses idioms such as '*kepala batu*' and '*berhidung tinggi*'.

In essence, Usman's concept of justice is governed by the conviction that all men are created equal. For that reason, he rejects a society that imposes a social hierarchy which makes some more equal than others. Thus, Usman's call for equality among individuals and equality among human beings stems firstly from his dissatisfaction with the values of traditional Malay society which was based on status and hierarchy. Secondly, Usman was influenced by socialist ideology.⁷⁵ He strongly believes every individual should have equal rights and be given equal treatment. Usman's stories show the harmful effects of injustice in society.

Usman stresses in his article "*Peranan Penulis dalam Zaman Pembangunan*" (The Role of Writer in the Development Era) that when he talks about justice, he means justice for all people.⁷⁶ In other words, there should be no discrimination between the poor and the rich or the employees and the employer and he criticizes groups in society if they are unjust to others. Every human being should have equal rights and any form of discrimination should be erased from the people's vocabulary. He also wants all categories of law to be just. Implied in his words is that once equality is achieved society is less subjected to stress and strains and harmony is more likely to be the result.

Endnotes

- ¹ Majid Khadduri, *The Islamic Conception of Justice*, Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984, p. 5.
- ² J. Milton Cowan (ed.), *Hans Wehr: A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1966, p. 596.
- ³ *Kamus Dewan Edisi Baru*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1989, p. 8 states 'adil' means i. 'yang atau dengan berdasarkan pertimbangan (peraturan, ketentuan dan lain-lain) yang wajar atau berpatutan (berkenaan dengan orang, tindakan, hukuman, keputusan, undang-undang dan lain-lain), tidak memihak ke mana-mana (apabila memutuskan sesuatu dan sebagainya)'. ii. 'tidak melebihi atau kurang daripada yang sewajarnya, sepatutnya'. 'Keadilan' means 'sifat (perbuatan, tindakan dan lain-lain) yang adil'. 'Ketidakadilan' means 'perihal (keadaan, perbuatan, kejadian dan sebagainya) tidak adil'.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, 'seimbang' means 'setimbang, sama berat, tidak berat sebelah'. 'Imbang' means 'timbang, tidak berat sebelah' (p. 447). The word 'saksama' means 'tidak berat sebelah, adil' (p. 1097). 'Sama rata' means 'semuanya sama' while 'sama tengah' means 'tidak memihak ke mana-mana' (p. 1102). The word 'menyamarkan' means 'menjadikan atau menganggap sama atau sama rata (tidak berlebihan atau berkurangan, tidak ada perbezaan antara satu sama lain)' (p. 1103). While the word 'setimpal' means 'seimbang, sepadan, bertimbang' (p. 1366).
- ⁵ Milner, A.C., *Kerajaan: Malay Political Culture on the Eve of Colonial Rule*, Arizona: The University of Arizona Press, 1982, p. 40.
- ⁶ W.G. Shellabear, *Sejarah Melayu*, Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Fajar Bakti, 1975.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 24 - 25.
- ⁸ Shaharuddin Maaruf, *Malay Ideas on Development*, Singapore: Times Book International, 1988, p. 4.
- ⁹ W.G. Shellabear, *op. cit.*, p. 144.
- ¹⁰ Kassim Ahmad (ed.), *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1966.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 288.
- ¹² Chandra Muzaffar, *Protector?: An Analysis of the Concept and Practice of Loyalty in Leader-led Relationships Within Malay Society*, Pulau Pinang: Aliran Publication, 1979, p. 36.
- ¹³ Anthony Milner, *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya: Contesting Nationalism and the Expansion of the Public Sphere*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p.10.
- ¹⁴ Shaharuddin Maaruf (1988), *op. cit.*, p. 25.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 37.
- ¹⁷ It refers to the special spiritual forces surrounding Malay kingship.
- ¹⁸ Shaharuddin Maaruf (1988), *op. cit.*, p. 26.
- ¹⁹ Usman Awang, "Matinya Seorang Pahlawan", *Gema Dunia*, Bilangan 8, 1962, pp. 75 -95.
- ²⁰ Usman Awang, "Pengalaman Saya Menulis Sajak" in Dinsman and Sutung Umar Rs (eds.), *Sikap dan Pemikiran Usman Awang*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1983, p. 97.
- ²¹ Puisi-puisi Pilihan Sasterawan Negara Usman Awang, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1987, p. 154.
- ²² Usman Awang, "Pengalaman Saya dalam Tahun-tahun 50-an" in Dinsman and Sutung Umar Rs (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 75 -76.
- ²³ Penulis (Tahun 4) Bilangan I - II, April - Ogos 1970. Quoted from Dinsman and Sutung Umar Rs (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 62.
- ²⁴ Kamrul Idris, "Social Equality is His Objective", *New Straits Times*, 8 December 1983.
- ²⁵ *Melayu Raya*, 10 October 1950. Quoted from Mek Siti Hussin and Aminah Mohd. Nasir, "Isu-isu Penting (Awal 1950-an) dari Kaca Mata Akhbar Majlis dan Melayu Raya" in Khoo Kay Kim (ed.), *Sejarah Masyarakat Melayu Modern*, Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Universiti Malaya, 1985, p. 255.
- ²⁶ *Degup Jantung*, Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Melayu Baru, 1963, pp. 48 - 54. As mentioned in Chapter 3, from Adibah Amin's research on Usman Awang's short stories that the short story "Surat dari Seorang Mata-mata" was written in 1950. For more detail see "Kata Pengantar" in *Degup Jantung*, Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Melayu Baru, 1963, p. 3-4.
- ²⁷ "Surat dari Seorang Mata-mata", p. 52, 'Nasib kita tidak ada siapa yang hendak membelanya. Pada hal rasanya jawatan kita ini kalau tidak lebih maka tidak pula kurang dari jawatan-jawatan lain, apalagi di masa darurat ini'.
- ²⁸ "Surat dari Seorang Mata-mata", p. 52, 'Gaji kita polis tidak juga berubah. Cuma pegawai-pegawai tinggi dan orang yang telah hidup mewah saja yang berubah'.
- ²⁹ "Surat dari Seorang Mata-mata", p. 52, 'Pada hal rasanya jawatan kita ini kalau tidak lebih maka tidak pula kurang dari jawatan-jawatan lain, apalagi di masa darurat ini'.

- 30 "Surat dari Seorang Mata-mata", p. 53, 'rayuan sebuah dua yang melalui akhbar-akhbar hanya jadi asap dilayangkan angin dan hilang di angkasa'.
- 31 "Surat dari Seorang Mata-mata", p. 53, 'Sampai bilakah kejadian-kejadian seperti ini iaitu peristiwa-peristiwa sedih dan penderitaan yang pernah kulihat dan alami akan berakhir dengan suatu perubahan yang melapangkan hidup kami semua?'
- 32 "Surat dari Seorang Mata-mata", p. 52, 'Nasib kita tidak siapa yang hendak membela'.
- 33 "Surat dari Seorang Mata-mata", p. 52, 'Sebenarnya kita ini tidak berusaha untuk membela nasib kita, kataku dengan tegas. Kita ini hanya menanti rahim orang seperti pengemis di kaki lima saja.'
- 34 *Utusan Zaman*, 7 May 1950.
- 35 *Mastika*, May 1951, pp. 25 - 27.
- 36 *Degup Jantung*, Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Melayu Baru, 1963, pp. 173 - 185.
- 37 "Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua", 'Apakah pula ertinya sebuah badan kebajikan yang hanya mementingkan nasib segolongan rakyat yang memang mempunyai penghidupan mewah bermandikan wang dan bersorakkan bahagia yang memuncak tinggi?'
- 38 "Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua", '..bagaimana pula nasib segolongan rakyat jelata yang hidup merengkas macam kerakap hidup di batu?'
- 39 "Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua", 'Badan yang kononnya akan memberi perlindungan pada nasib rakyat itu belum lagi nampak bayang menghulurkan tangan memberi bantuan.'
- 40 "Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua", 'harapan pembelaan dari badan kebajikan jauh sangat ...'
- 41 "Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua", 'Kalau betul badan kebajikan akan membela nasib rakyat jelata, tentu tidak payah ditadah-tadahkan tangan sebagai mengemis atau dijerit-jerit minta tolong, mereka pasti lebih tahu, lebih mengerti tanggungan dan kewajiban mereka, kerana dia bukannya diam di puncak gunung atau di dasar lautan, hanya di kampung biasa'.
- 42 "Menentang", p. 26, 'Masyarakat yang tidak adil menimbulkan keburukan pada orang yang sengsara'.
- 43 "Menentang", p. 26, 'kalau itu semua adalah hanya menyenangkan satu golongan yang memang sudah senang dan mewah'.
- 44 "Menentang", p. 26, 'semuanya tidak berguna dan bererti kalau hidup dan tegaknya itu tidak dapat menjamin taraf kehidupan rakyat jelata yang miskin'.
- 45 "Sebuah Khemah Didirikan", p. 176, 'Kita sekarang bukan hanya menuntut satu dua sen dari keuntungan yang begitu banyak, tetapi kita sebenarnya menuntut keadilan ...dan untuk keadilanlah yang kita perjuangkan sekarang ini...Majikan hanya menepuk-nepuk bahu kita bila kita cedera dan menghantarkan bunga ke hospital. Itu saja, saudara-saudara, itu saja'.
- 46 "Sebuah Khemah Didirikan", p. 183, 'Biar majikan sendiri yang menghalau kita. Ingat, kita menuntut keadilan. Beginikah keadilan yang kita dapati?'
- 47 "Sebuah Khemah Didirikan", p. 175, 'Majikan telah mempermain-mainkan kita. Saudara-saudara, tuntutan kita telah dianggap sepi...dan bukan itu saja, bukan itu saja saudara-saudara, majikan bukan saja menolak mentah-mentah tuntutan-tuntutan kita tetapi sebaliknya telah menunjukkan sikap kuku besinya dengan membuang dua orang kawan-kawan kita'.
- 48 "Sebuah Khemah Didirikan", p. 176, 'Majikan hanya menepuk-nepuk bahu kita bila kita cedera dan menghantarkan bunga ke hospital. Itu saja, saudara-saudara, itu saja'.
- 49 Shahrudin Maaruf, *op. cit.*, p. 6.
- 50 Kamrul Idris, "Social Equality is His Objective", *New Straits Times*, 8 December 1983.
- 51 *Utusan Zaman*, 17 September 1950.
- 52 *Utusan Zaman*, 10 June 1951.
- 53 *Mutiara*, Bilangan 37, November 1951, pp. 30 -31.
- 54 *Utusan Zaman*, 23 December 1951.
- 55 "Untuk Jadi Isteri Orang Bangsawan", 'Aku tidak mahu menjerit-jerit meminta diadakan demokrasi tulin, sama rata sama rasa, sebab banyak orang lebih dulu dari aku yang mahu memecahkan soal ini namun hasilnya hampa belaka.'
- 56 Chandra Muzaffar, "Keadilan Sosial di Malaysia: Satu Penilaian" in Azizan Bahari and Chandra Muzaffar (eds.), *Keadilan Sosial*, Kuala Lumpur: Institut Kajian Dasar, 1996, pp. 172 - 173.
- 57 "Manusia dan Hidup", 'Ingatannya melayang-layang mengenangkan penderitaan-penderitaan hidup yang disebabkan oleh susunan masyarakat yang pincang dan tak adil'.
- 58 "Manusia dan Hidup", 'Hari ini rakyat yang miskin baik seperti diri kita yang tinggal di bandar atau seperti ayah yang tinggal di kampung adalah semakin rendah dan jatuh darjah kehidupannya. Tenaga dan kemiskinan kita telah menjadi perkakas dan korban dari satu golongan manusia yang senang dan mewah'.
- 59 "Surat dari Seorang Teman", p. 30.
- 60 "Kejadian di Kampung", 'Ikutlah kemahuan-kemahuan ibu bapamu. Ini bererti kau membalas air susu ibu dan titik peluh bapamu memelihara dan membesarkan kau. Kita yang miskin-miskin ini memang

selalu menjadi tempat berpijak orang-orang atas yang mewah dan senang. Di antara sama manusia ini memang payah terdapat keadilan kerana keadilan hanya ada dari perasaan yang timbang rasa, tetapi orang senang memang selalu mencari kesempatan memijak dan menguasai orang-orang miskin seperti kita ini'.

61 *Utusan Zaman*, 6 February 1955.

62 *Utusan Zaman*, 24 July 1955.

63 *Degup Jantung*, Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Melayu Baru, 1963, pp. 165 - 172.

64 "Menyambung Kisah yang Tetap Hidup", 'Mengapa dalam hal ini tak ada keadilan? Cuba kalau undang-undang kahwin ini benar-benar adil, lelaki tak boleh menceraikan isterinya kalau tak ada persetujuan isterinya, lelaki tak dibolehkan kahwin sampai dua atau lebih dalam sekali masa.'

65 "Menyambung Kisah yang Tetap Hidup", 'Saya adalah salah seorang isteri yang jadi korban undang-undang yang tak adil ini.'

66 "Menyambung Kisah yang Tetap Hidup", 'Encik tau, berapa ribu lagikah atau berapa puluh ribu lagikah isteri-isteri yang akan jadi korban undang-undang yang tak adil ini?'

67 "Menyambung Kisah yang Tetap Hidup", 'Encik tak tahu tentang hal-hal kami perempuan-perempuan yang jadi korban undang-undang nikah kahwin yang tak adil bagi pihak perempuan.'

68 "Aturan-Kodi...?", 'yang salahnya dan yang paling tertakutnya ialah orang-orang yang mempergunakan kepercayaan atau agama itu untuk kepentingan dirinya, untuk kepuasan dirinya sahaja'.

69 Ahmad Ibrahim, *Family Law in Malaysia and Singapore*, Singapore: Malayan Law Journal Pte. Ltd., 1984, p. 206.

70 *Ibid.*, p. 220.

71 "Tugas", p. 169, 'Undang-undang tak mengenal orang. Tak pilih kasih, tak pilih sahabat atau saudara. Ibu bapa sendiri, kalau salah, harus ditangkap'.

72 "Tugas", p. 170, '...kerana keadilan tentang salah dan benar ada pada mahkamah, dalam timbangan seorang hakim atau pengadil.'

73 *Kamus Dewan Edisi Baru*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1989, p. 8.

74 "Tugas", p. 172, 'Saya suka awak kerja bagus. Awak ikut undang-undang. Saya kenal itu taukeh. Dia ada bikin repot pada saya pasal awak saman dia. Tapi awak betul. Bagus. Saya mahu mata-mata mesti ikut dia punya kerja'.

75 As mentioned in Chapter 1. See also Cheah Boon Kheng, "Usman Awang: International Recognition for Malaysia's Best Known Poet", *The Sunday Mail*, 26 October 1969. He states: "Usman Awang has been described as a 'romantic', a patriot, a humanist, a propagandist and a socialist".

76 Usman Awang, "Peranan Penulis dalam Zaman Pembangunan", *Penulis* (Tahun 4), Bilangan I - II, April-August 1970 in Dinsman and Sutung Umar Rs (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 60 - 66.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CONCEPT OF LEADERSHIP

Leadership, in universal terms, appears to be a difficult concept to define because the term itself is abstract and its definition not clear. There are almost as many different definitions of leadership, as there are persons who attempt to define the concept. Among social scientists who emphasize the concept of leadership, there is no close agreement on a conceptual definition or even on the theoretical significance of leadership processes.¹

Usman Awang has his own perception of leadership. Therefore, my concern in this chapter is to define Usman Awang's conceptual framework of leadership from his short stories. Before I discuss the main section of this chapter, that is, analysing several of Usman's short stories in which the concept of leadership appears, it is useful for the reader to know briefly the traditional Malay concept of leadership. By doing so, we will be able to see how that concept differs from present day perceptions of it. This will be followed by an explanation of several Malay words related to the concept and Usman's experiences related to this concept will then be discussed.

The Malay Concept of Leadership

Leadership in traditional Malay society was an ascribed status. During the Melaka Sultanate, the head and centre of the political system was a ruler drawn from a royal patrilineage, his authority buttressed by some of the 'divine king' attributes of earlier Hindu dynasties.² As mentioned in Chapter 4, the ruler was seen to have an aura of sanctity and supernatural power (*daulat*). It was believed that any Malay who infringed the '*daulat*' of the ruler or who committed treason (*derhaka*) to the ruler would suffer retribution from the impersonal force of outraged royal dignity. "It is the custom of the Malays that they shall never be disloyal to their ruler".³ As a result this served to consolidate the ruler's position "as one which admitted no challenge".⁴ The ruler was therefore above society and under Muslim law he was God's representative on earth, as protector of the faith and overseer of the subjects.

The Sultan was dependent on the support of hereditary greater and lesser chiefs, drawn from the royal families or the aristocracy, for power. Some of these chiefs held positions as important court officials and administrators, while others were district chiefs. At the village level, which formed the bottom of the administrative pyramid, the day to day activities of the subjects of the Ruler were supervised by the '*penghulu*' (head) or

'*ketua kampung*' (village headman) who were, more often than not, commoners but also privileged to hold their positions by rule of heredity.

Thus, society was divided between the ruling class and the '*rakyat*' (masses) in which the ruling elite's claim to leadership was seen as a natural right which was seldom questioned or challenged. Although only a small number among the elite at any one time held administrative positions, all held high social status and a privileged existence. The traditional leaders demanded and received the respect, loyalty and obedience of the '*rakyat*'.

Islam brought yet another group of leaders in the Malay community. Mosque officials headed by the prayer leader, the '*imam*', and leaders of smaller prayer houses known as the '*bilal*' and '*katib*' held respected positions in traditional Malay society. In general, men who had a reputation for religiosity and who led '*tarikat*' activities or who opened Muslim religious schools called the '*madrasah*' were revered by Malays.

Existing side by side, the hereditary chiefs and the religious leaders complemented one another, for while the former provided the channel to the centre of earthly power and therefore, at least theoretically, guaranteeing physical protection, the latter provided spiritual sustenance for the subject class.

When the British introduced colonial rule beginning in 1874, the traditional hierarchy was largely preserved, although only in its form but not in its substance. Power was transferred to a new administrative structure set up by the British, while the traditional chiefs retained their positions as community leaders but not their political power. Only at the lowest level, that of the '*penghulu*' and '*ketua kampung*', were the positions integrated into the new administration, thus turning these leaders into salaried government officials.

In the ensuing years, when there was a greater demand for more specialized bureaucratic institutions and personnel to cope with the pressing functions of maintaining law and order, administering the collection of taxes and revenue and providing services, the British introduced a policy of integrating the traditional Malay elite in the modern administrative structure. This began with a policy of providing the sons of the elite with an English education, at an exclusive institution called the Malay College Kuala Kangsar (MCKK). As this college mainly catered for the sons of the aristocrats until the outbreak of the Second World War, it meant that the recruitment into the service was almost entirely from the aristocracy. However, when the war ended the British adopted a more liberal attitude and opened the door of the bureaucracy to other Malays.

In the late 1940s and the 1950s, along with British officials in all spheres of Government, the Malay bureaucrats together with a small number of other educated Malays, who had found their way into the professions and became doctors, engineers, academics and economists, to name but a few, by virtue of their educational achievements and professional standing, came to occupy positions of respect and often leadership in Malay society. Such leaders acquired their legitimacy not because of the accident of birth but because of their achievements. Political developments in the country before independence, also brought in its wake a new set of leaders whose participation in politics conferred, on many, positions of influence and, on some, potential real power. This power was in fact acquired, when the British withdrew at the time of independence in 1957 and a new Malay dominated political elite ruled the country.

Thus, when Usman began his career as a short story writer in the late 1940s, both elements of traditional leadership and modern leadership were present in society. As he was advocating societal change and regarded leaders as essential in any scheme to improve the conditions of the people, Usman naturally addressed the question of leadership in society, and placed under scrutiny individuals in positions of leadership and at the same time described his concept of leadership from the words he used in his short stories.

Definitions

The word '*pemimpin*' (leader), very commonly used in modern Malay, does not seem to have appeared in classical Malay literature. What appears in both modern and classical literature is the root word '*pimpin*',⁵ which means to guide, to show the way or to go hand in hand.⁶ However there is a slight difference in meaning when the prefix '*me*' is added to the root word and it becomes '*memimpin*' for it then means firstly, to take someone by the hand and to lead him/her to a certain place or guide; secondly, to take the lead or to lead and organize; thirdly, to train someone so that he/she can work independently. When built on the Malay language '*ke ... an*' construction it forms an abstract noun, '*kepimpinan*' which implies the quality of a leadership.⁷ On the other hand, the word '*pemimpin*' is formed by adding the prefix '*pe*', which signifies a doer of an act, to '*pimpin*', transforming the first phoneme of this root word from a labial 'p' to a nasalized 'm' gives it the meaning of a person who leads and as in the case of its English equivalent, it means a person who leads his follower(s) towards a particular goal or goals.⁸ In its modern usage it is mainly used in relation to those who lead in politics, especially at the higher levels. It is also applicable sometimes to leaders in other fields, for example, religion and music.⁹ There are other words, namely, '*pimpinan*' or '*kepemimpinan*' which mean leadership.¹⁰ At present, it is sometimes used quite

interchangeably with '*pemimpin*', to give the same meaning. For instance, either of the two terms can be used to refer to a 'leader' of a musical band or a political party. But in normal usage the term '*pemimpin*', brings out more explicitly the sense of 'one who leads'. Even though leading is an important aspect of a '*pemimpin*' in Malay culture, a '*pemimpin*' must also guide the followers.

Another term in the group of words related to leadership is '*ketua*' (head, chief). The term '*ketua*' comes from the root word '*tua*', which literally means old. However, the word '*ketua*' means firstly, an elderly person and one with a lot of experience, for example, in the village; secondly, a person who leads a group of people, organization or department.¹¹ Besides, '*ketua*' is also used to mean chief or head.¹² Age is certainly a quality that is much revered in many traditional societies; in fact, in some of them the oldest is regarded as the head or leader of a social group, especially if it is kinship-based. The presence of the word '*tua*' in the word '*ketua*' suggests the significance of age as a determining factor of the position of headship or leadership in traditional Malay society. In Malay society today, especially at the rural level where traditional influence still holds strong, age is honoured and the elders are not only respected but quite often given preference over the young in terms of holding leading positions within institutions. Even in a modern institution such as a political party, there are people who stress the importance of age and who are hesitant to concede positions of leadership to the young, even if they are well-qualified.¹³ The words '*ketuai*' or '*mengetuai*' denote the act of "heading" an institution or leading a group. The term '*ketua*' seems to give greater emphasis to "one who heads" without necessarily exercising leadership.¹⁴ Thus, age, experience and respect are among the elements associated with the term '*ketua*'.

While the word '*ketua*' is sometimes used as a general term to mean leader, it is more often seen in combination with another word to describe the designated or actual position of leadership that is held by an individual. Thus a '*Ketua Kampung*' is a village headman, a '*Ketua Jabatan*' is a departmental head, and a '*Ketua Belia*' is a youth leader.

Rather similar to the word '*ketua*' is the term '*penghulu*'. It comes from '*hulu*' which means variously, at the head of the Ruler (*hulu Raja*), the handle of a weapon or tool (*hulu parang*), the source of a river (*hulu sungai*). In its first sense it has connotations of nobility, of someone to be revered and treated with all due ceremony. In its second sense it suggests a place to hold on to, '*tempat berpegang*'. A '*keris*' or a '*parang*' (short machete knife) cannot be used effectively without a handle which can be firmly gripped; thus a group without a strong leader cannot be mobilised to do anything effectively.¹⁵ Thus, nobility, a person to hold on to and elderly are associated with the word '*penghulu*'. When '*penghulu*' is used as a general term it means a person who heads a group of people. In traditional society, the terms '*Bendahara*', '*Temenggung*' and

'Laksamana' refer to three of the highest offices or administrative positions in the Malay polity. However, when referring to the person holding the positions it is quite common to use the terms *'Penghulu Bendahara'* or *'Penghulu Temenggung'* thus reinforcing the element of leadership and, by inference, the existence of a following. Another example where the word *'penghulu'* is used as a general term to mean leader or master is in the phrase *'hamba dan penghulunya'* (a slave and his master). However, specifically, *'penghulu'* is a title given to the head of a village in traditional society and although today the position of *'penghulu'* is one that requires the holder to oversee a *'mukim'* or a cluster of villages the term remains associated with leadership at the lowest end of the administrative hierarchy.

Therefore, in the Malay language different terms are used such as *'ketua'*, *'penghulu'* and *'pemimpin'* to identify leadership. Very often these words are used interchangeably to convey the same meaning. However, each of these words can also be used to convey nuances depending on the context in which it is used and the person who uses it. By examining several approaches to the concept of leadership, we will be able to place Usman's perception of the concept of leadership in perspective, and to see how he uses words associated with leaders and leadership, to convey both the values of society and the essence of his thinking.

Usman Awang and the Concept of Leadership

When Usman Awang was in the Police Force from 1947 to 1952, he was just a lower ranking policeman and not in a position of leadership. Nevertheless, he could observe leaders in action such as his immediate superiors as well as the top man in the Police Force in the district, the O.C.P.D. (Officer in Charge of Police District). At that time the O.C.P.D. was an Englishman. Outside the Police Force, Usman came across other types of leaders. As mentioned in Chapter 1, in 1947 while Usman and his friends were on duty to guard a congress organized by the Malayan Malay Nationalist Party (PKMM)¹⁶ he came in contact with the nationalist leaders such as Dr. Burhanuddin Helmy,¹⁷ Ahmad Boestamam¹⁸ the leader of the Organization of Awakened Youth (API)¹⁹ and Shamsiah Fakeh²⁰ the leader of the Generation of Aware Women (AWAS).²¹ He was very impressed with these committed leaders, who enthusiastically marched in the streets waving banners with forceful messages and delivered spirited speeches.²² Their speeches were inspiring and uplifting and aroused in the young Usman, the spirit of Malay nationalism.

But Usman did not have to wait long to be in a position of leadership himself. After he left the Police Force, his career path changed for he began to involve himself in

activities and held positions which complimented his work as a writer. Thus, beginning from the mid 1950s, Usman saw himself appointed to several important posts at the top of ASAS 50 organisation and in PENA, and worked in various managerial positions as a salaried official in *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka*.

Holding the view that leaders and leadership were important in order to generate change in a society, Usman was understandably concerned that the Malays should have good leaders to lead them to a better and brighter future. But Usman's concept of leadership was one which emphasized the element of the leader being from the people and for the people. This is in sharp contrast to the traditional understanding of the concept, where the Sultan was above the people and his rule was not necessarily for the people. From his short stories, we can see that service to the people is at the core of Usman's notion of leadership. In fact, it is the main justification for having leaders in society. Thus, when Usman observed that leaders were not doing their duty, he was extremely critical of them.

As we have seen, Usman had been disappointed in the behaviour of the traditional leaders whom he regarded as behind the times with their outmoded ideas and values. This was probably his way of saying that they were no longer relevant to society. It would appear that he looked to the new or modern Malay leaders for leadership but, as we shall see, he was equally disappointed. In May 1970, Usman spoke to a group of students from Malaysia and Singapore at Malaysia Hall in London, in which he commented that some leaders felt that they worked very hard and suggested that a golf complex be built so that they could relax. Usman pointed out that the poor also worked from early in the morning until late evening. Thus, Usman implied that the leaders only thought about their own comfort and leisure, and did not take into consideration that the poor who toiled hard from morning to night, did not have the luxury of facilities specially built for them in which to relax. Usman then stated emphatically that the leaders we want are those who could lead the nation and the country²³ and not those who were more concerned with building a golf course. Here, the concept of leadership Usman wants to put forward is leadership as personality.

It may be observed that the remarks made in London in 1970, would have been preceded by a period of almost three decades of observing leadership in the country out of which more than a decade had seen Malaysia enjoy its independence. An examination of his short stories, which touch on the issue of leadership, will show that Usman was disappointed by the fact that he found Malaya/Malaysia deficient in good leadership. What would have been particularly disturbing to him was that despite gaining freedom from colonial rule, which he had in some measure blamed for impeding progress in society, the country was run by men who were not, in his estimation, true leaders.

An Analysis of Usman's Short Stories

There are three keywords which Usman uses to convey different aspects of the concept of leadership namely '*ketua*', '*pemimpin*' and '*wakil*'. Usman uses these terms to mean leader. While the two terms '*ketua*' and '*pemimpin*' can be used to convey the same meaning, when used in particular contexts an impression can be conveyed that there is a subtle difference between the two terms. The term '*wakil*' on the other hand does not necessarily mean leader although in some circumstances it does. '*Wakil*' is an Arabic loan-word in the Malay language which means authorized representative, attorney in fact, proxy; (business) manager; head clerk; deputy, vice-; agent; trustee; defence counsel; attorney, lawyer.²⁴ While '*pemimpin*' is a relatively new word in the Malay vocabulary, '*wakil*' is not, although the introduction of elected bodies and democratic institutions has made '*wakil*' a much utilised term. Specifically, in Usman's short stories in which he uses the word '*wakil*' he means elected representatives to legislative executive bodies. Thus, he is, in fact, talking about a new breed of Malay political leaders. Usman also uses other words to refer to leaders such as '*imam*', '*penghulu*' and O.C.P.D. However, he uses these not as general terms to mean leader but as titles or designations for particular positions or appointments whose holders are regarded as leaders in society.

The subtle differences between one word and the other seen in the three words, '*ketua*', '*pemimpin*' and '*wakil*', when they occur in Usman's short stories are of less consequence than the fact that Usman through these stories seeks to create awareness that leadership is a very serious issue in Malayan society. It is obvious that he sees the issue of leadership from a moral standpoint. Indeed the whole thrust of his argument, as will be seen below, is centered round his notion that leadership in any situation in society carries with it the obligation to guide the people properly and sincerely towards the achievement of certain goals. Thus, his stories tend to highlight qualities of good leadership and to contrast them with characteristics of bad leadership. In this section, Usman's short stories on leadership emphasize character and capabilities and not social position as a mark of good leadership thus implying that leadership is not the exclusive right or privilege of people who are socially well placed in society.

The analysis of Usman Awang's short stories on his concept of leadership will be divided into five sections, namely, an examination of leadership as a focus of group processes;²⁵ leadership as the exercise of influence; leadership as a form of persuasion; leadership as personality and its effects; and leadership as a power relation.

i. Leadership as a Focus of Group Processes

In the short story entitled "*Peristiwa Bunga Telur*" (The Egg Flower Incident)²⁶ published on 24 April 1949, the narrator portrays the main character, Awang, and his friends attending a cultural show. Awang is taken by surprise when his friends urge him to give a short speech at the end of the show, to express appreciation of the commitment of the theatre group to society. It seems the theatre group had been collecting donations for the Social Welfare Department by selling egg flowers. For Awang, it was the first time that he had to give a public speech.

In this short story, it is not stated that Awang was appointed as a leader by his friends, because the term used to describe his impromptu appointment as speaker was that he was urged (*didesak*) by his friends to deliver a speech. When Usman uses the word '*didesak*', it describes that Awang does not begin as a leader, but his friends need someone to represent them and so they almost force Awang into a leadership role. Thus, we see that for Usman leadership involves followers as much as leaders. His emphasis in this story is on the followers who need a leader.

Nevertheless, as the story unfolds it becomes clear that Usman intends to convey the idea that Awang has leadership qualities which are apparent to his friends. This can be seen immediately after the speech, when Ahmad, one of his friends, congratulates Awang because his loud voice made him sound like Bung Tomo or Sutomo, one of the early leaders of the Indonesian revolution in Surabaya.²⁷ When Usman uses the words '*syabas*' (congratulations), it conveys the idea that Awang's speech is excellent and his loud voice portrays his credibility as a leader just like the Indonesian nationalist leader. This shows that the followers recognize the leadership qualities from the personality of the individual they desire as their leader. Here, Usman wants to convey the idea that a true leader is one whose qualities of leadership are apparent to the people around him.

Another factor in good leadership is the ability to translate personal qualities in various ways, including the capability to communicate effectively and to act as a representative and mouthpiece for the followers. The ability to give a public speech appears to be a very important criterion for measuring leadership. Usman is captivated by oratory perhaps both for its ability to immediately capture the imagination of the audience and for the long term influence it could have on people. More importantly, in this story Usman conveys the idea that leadership is not confined to people with ascribed status such as the aristocrats, but can also be found in a commoner. It is no accident that Usman chooses the name Awang for his hero and relates to the well-known nationalist leader, Bung Tomo. Awang is a very common and popular name among village folks particularly in the east coast of Peninsula Malaysia so that in choosing the name Awang, he conveys

the fact that his hero is not from the ranks of the socially privileged. Therefore, when he uses the words '*syabas*' and '*macam Bung Tomo*' and relate them to the words '*didesak*', and '*diketuai*' (led) Usman conceptualises leadership as a focus of group processes.

Evidently, these qualities are also seen by Pak Bakar, the organizer of the theatre group, who expresses the desire to meet Awang in order to invite him and his friends to a tea party the next day. Awang also impresses a lady actor, Siti Rohani, who writes a letter to him in which she expresses her gratitude for the appreciation of the arts and culture, shown by his friends who are '*diketuai*' by Awang. Thus, the words '*didesak*' and '*diketuai*' in this instance describe Usman's idea of leadership, in which a person is recognised by those around him as being of leadership material. The term '*diketuai*' used by Siti Rohani in her letter to Awang, indicates the direction Usman wants to take his readers. He has portrayed Awang as a leader by virtue of the fact that a group of friends appoint him to speak on their behalf, Pak Bakar approaches the group through him and Siti Rohani recognizes him as the leader of the group.

In this story Usman concentrates on showing the intrinsic qualities of leadership which can be found in any man which makes him a natural leader by his followers. He is not concerned with leaders in formal positions of authority. He is more preoccupied with looking at the personality of a leader which becomes the concern of his followers. When he compares Awang's loud voice to that of a revolutionary Indonesian leader, Bung Tomo, it seems he implies that strong spirit and courage are reflected in a forceful or loud voice.

Another story which describes Usman's notion of leadership as a focus of group processes can be seen in "*Menentang*" (Resist)²⁸ published in May 1951. The story describes Ghani, a youth in a village who is aware of the sufferings of the poor families. Possessing a strong spirit and determination, he manages to form a group of youths to help the poor in the village. One of their successes is seen when they managed to repair the roof of Mak Limah's house, without assistance from the Welfare Department. Even though Ghani is considered as a leader of the group of youths, he is not described as a '*ketua*' or '*pemimpin*' by the author. To describe Ghani's character, the author uses the word '*pelopor*' (pioneer), in trying to work for the benefit of the poor people in the village. A pioneer is in fact a leader and in this case Ghani begins an activity never before seen in the village.

Even though the terms '*ketua*' or '*pemimpin*' are not used by Usman to describe Ghani, in the story the narrator mentions that Ghani's friends hope he will '*memimpin*' (to lead or to lead and organize) them. The phrase '*diharap akan memimpin mereka*' (hope will lead them), demonstrates that Ghani has shown his credibility to be a leader which

makes his friends desire him as their leader. The word '*diharap*', gives an idea that the group hopes that he will agree to be the leader. It also conveys the idea of reliability. Ghani becomes the focus of the group because he is the only youth in the village (*satu-satunya pemuda di kampung itu*) who is concerned with the poverty of villagers. The word '*satu-satunya*' (one and only) also emphasises that Ghani is special and that this special quality is recognised by his peers. Further, in this story Ghani's speeches are well received by his friends. Usman uses the words '*mereka memuji Ghani*' (they praise Ghani) to describe Ghani's credibility. The word '*memuji*' gives an idea that Ghani's speech is excellent, interesting or spiritually uplifting so that it wins the support and appreciation of the group. Thus, from the words '*diharap*', '*satu-satunya*' and '*memuji*', Usman conceptualises leadership as a focus of group processes.

Apart from that, Ghani is shown to be a person with strong principles which stimulate and motivate the organization to achieve its objectives. He urges his friends to be brave and to work hard, to change the fate of the poor people and to free them from poverty, oppression and atrocity.

The word '*pemimpin*' while not used in relation to Ghani, is however used in this story when the narrator criticizes political leaders. It relates to '*pemimpin*' who disregard their responsibility towards the poor people and a '*pemimpin*' who is good at giving ideas but does not follow them with actions. Through Ghani's comments, Usman criticizes the '*pemimpin*' :

Today many who claim to be leaders of the people know only how to order the village folks to farm, extend their paddy fields, send their children to school, catch fish, start a business etc., while they have never been to the village to see how the people they order about live in distress.²⁹

Usman criticizes the leaders by using sarcasm: '*banyak yang mengaku pemimpin*' (many claim to be leaders) but '*hanya pandai memerintah*' (only know how to give orders). Leaders of the type described above do not fulfil their promise to help the people. To Usman, as later pointed out by Nordin Selat, "a leader should not betray the trust given to him"³⁰ by the people to help and protect them. In the story, Ghani comments that the '*pemimpin*' have neglected their responsibility to lead, to guide and to show the people, especially the poor, how to improve their lives. Here, by using the phrases '*banyak yang mengaku pemimpin*' and '*hanya pandai memerintah*', Usman highlights the personal qualities of a leader because to Usman personal qualities are important to the concept of leadership.

Usman begins to convey his concept of leadership by using the word '*diketahui*' as can be seen in "*Peristiwa Bunga Telur*" (1949). However, in his later short story in this

group, "*Menentang*" (1951), Usman develops his notion with several new words such as '*pemimpin*' and '*memerintah*'. This shows that his concept of leadership is not only confined to the notion of leading, that is to say, to be at the head of a group as implied by the word '*ketua*', but also includes the idea of guiding and giving directions or orders as indicated by the words '*pemimpin*' and '*memerintah*'.

ii. Leadership as the Exercise of Influence

Another dimension of the concept of leadership, can be seen in the short story entitled "*Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua*" (The Fate of An Old Mother)³¹ published on 7 May 1950. Here, the main character, Osman is appointed as '*ketua*' (a leader) by his friends to head a group of youths who do co-operative work in a village. Besides, Osman is shown as a person who can influence others, when he succeeds in forming a youth group to work together voluntarily to help the village folks with their daily chores. His strong influence is further shown, when his opinion that they should not help the rich is heeded by the group. The incident arose when Orang Kaya Omar (Rich Man Omar), asks Osman and his friends to work his paddy fields. Osman refuses to do so because he believes that a rich person who can afford hired help should not be entitled to free labour.

Osman who has '*jiwa yang halus*' (a sensitive heart), '*budi yang tinggi*' (excellent behaviour) and '*mempunyai jiwa baharu*' (has a new spirit) is appointed as a '*ketua*' (leader) by the group. He is described as being able to attract (*dapat menarik*) the youths in the village away from the coffee shop to work in the paddy fields. He also is able to influence the interest (*menarik minat*) of the youths, to read newspapers and magazines. Furthermore, Osman exhibits qualities of leadership '*sehingga pemuda-pemuda di kampung itu terpengaruh*' (so much so the youths in the village are influenced) by his idea to form a co-operative group with the aim of helping old folks or disabled people to work in their paddy fields. Therefore, when Usman uses the words '*dapat menarik*', '*menarik minat*' and '*terpengaruh*' in the story they imply that the character, Osman, possesses good leadership qualities.

Osman's ability to influence others is shown when he persuades his friends not to help Orang Kaya Omar, by saying that if they help him it is like '*mencampak garam ke dalam laut atau menambak gunung yang sememang telah tinggi*' (to throw salt into the sea or to heap more soil on a mountain which is already high). In other words, it is a useless job to help the rich. Therefore, we can see that Usman has begun to look at another dimension of leadership, which is not mentioned in the previous short stories, that is the aspect of influence. Usman believes that a charismatic leader should be able to influence

his followers. Thus, from the word '*terpengaruh*', it gives Usman's notion of leadership as the exercise of influence.

In this story, Usman implies that there are two types of leadership, that as shown by Osman and that as represented by Orang Kaya Omar. The term Orang Kaya was commonly used in traditional Malay society, to apply to the nobility and was often used as a pre-fix to a name to imply status such as Orang Kaya Omar or Orang Kaya Menteri. Thus, a district chief could be referred to as Orang Kaya.³² Here, Usman contrasts a traditional-type leader who uses others for his own benefit, with one who is imbued with the modern idea of forming a co-operative group.

Orang Kaya Omar, is the antithesis of good leadership. His position is one that is ascribed and not achieved. He does not see that it is wrong to exploit the poor for his own gain and when he does not get his way he plots revenge. His revengefulness is expressed in the following words: "there grew the seed of vengeance towards Osman, only waiting for an opening to take his opportunity to get revenge".³³ As his words usually come true, '*masin*' (salty) and his influence is great (*besar pengaruh*), he is able to get Osman into trouble. As it turned out, Osman is later arrested and sentenced to jail after he is falsely accused by Orang Kaya Omar of intending to abolish the autocracy supported by the latter. Usman uses the phrase '*tumbuh benih dendam*' (grew the seed of vengeance) and '*untuk membalas dendam*' (to get revenge) to describe the cruelty of Orang Kaya Omar towards the poor. Through the narrator's voice, Usman expresses his disappointment and criticizes the unfeeling and selfish actions of the rich: "Sad, terrible, awful are some of the behaviours in our society".³⁴

Osman is portrayed as a leader whose followers obey him because he leads them in doing worthy causes for society. He is chosen by the group to be the leader and not imposed on them as happened in traditional Malay society. Although his followers listen to him, it is not blind loyalty that induces the obedience but the logic of his arguments. Thus Usman, the writer, is at pains to convey the idea that the hero in the story, leads by example, the legitimacy of his position being established by his leadership qualities. Nevertheless, one is left with the impression that Usman is not averse to the idea of a leader, who imposes his principles on his followers as the hero did when he is shown not to consult his followers, but merely persuades them by convincing words. Perhaps it is not because Usman supports autocratic behaviour, but because he was fully aware that Malay society of that era was still burdened by old values.

Usman also portrays what must have been, in his opinion, a disturbing feature in Malay society. When Osman is sentenced to jail, the group of co-operative workers disbanded and the youths show that they are scared to be associated with him. Osman is

no longer regarded as their protector. This seems to point to several possible impressions that Usman is trying to create. Firstly, that a strong leadership is an essential ingredient in any movement aimed at achieving set goals and that when the leadership is taken away the movement fails. Secondly, Usman wants to portray that the Malay society is not yet clear in its direction, so that without a leader the momentum is lost and the followers are unable to find their own way even though the goals have been set. Here again, Usman highlights the difference between a leader and a follower, for while the former is firm and full of courage the latter is easily frightened and cowed without a protector.

Therefore, there are two types of leadership put forward by Usman in his concept of leadership. One, good leadership which should be emulated and secondly, bad leadership from a person of noble background with a bad attitude. Orang Kaya Omar's ability to influence others to put Osman in jail testifies to the fact that he is a respected member of the community who, in most circumstances, would be regarded as a leader. He is probably older than the hero and might have even been the district chief. Yet Usman does not refer to him as a '*ketua*', thus leaving the reader with the impression that Orang Kaya Omar does not merit recognition as '*ketua*' because of his bad personality.

Another example of a good leader portrayed by the author can be seen in the short story entitled "*Sebuah Khemah Didirikan*" (A Tent is Put Up)³⁵ published in 1963. As mentioned in Chapter 4, in this story the author describes a strike action by a group of workers. They gather on a piece of empty land in front of their company's building. Their '*pemimpin*' (leader), a stout man with straight hair combed to the back, stands on a stack of timber in front of the building. All the workers gather to form a circle with the stout man in the middle. He begins to voice his dissatisfaction with their employer.

A few hours later, a group from the anti-riot unit of the police force arrives to control the situation. The chief of the police force then speaks to the '*pemimpin*'. Later, arising out of their discussion, the leader asks his friends to leave the grounds of the building site. Even though some of the workers disagree, they leave because they are persuaded by their leader, who says that "he himself would like to refuse to move from the grounds of the building but he must as a sign of respect for the law which means that we also have to respect the police officers who enforce the laws".³⁶ Eventually, all the picketers agree to leave.

In this story, Usman uses the words '*ketua*' and '*pemimpin*' to describe the leaders. '*Ketua*' is used when referring to the chief of the police force who comes to talk to the picketers' leader, while '*pemimpin*' is used to refer to the leader of the picketers. The concept of leadership derived from the narration about the chief of police force will be discussed in the following section.

Again, Usman's concept of leadership can be seen from his depiction of the picket leader whose leadership qualities are seen at every turn. Usman uses several words to describe the leader such as '*berbadan gempal*' (solidly built) and '*berpengaruh*' (influential). Further, there is the description by the narrator at the beginning of the gathering, when the workers gather around him and everyone is talking. As soon as the leader raises his hand, they stop talking. This can be seen from the narrator's description: "The solidly built man raises his hand in the air and slowly the loud voices diminish and vanish like being blown by the wind".³⁷ Here, the phrase '*suara-suara gemuruh itu berkurang dan kemudian hilang*' (slowly the loud voices diminish and vanish), gives the idea of the ability of an individual to control a situation turning a noisy gathering to one of silence. Then, when he starts to speak his voice becomes louder and vibrates in the air (*suaranya meninggi bergetar di udara*), compelling everyone to concentrate on him and wait patiently to hear him (*pekerja-pekerja yang berkumpul di depannya menajamkan perhatian menunggu dengan sabar*). When the leader with a voice strong with spiritual force (*suara yang kuat bersemangat*) asks the workers how much profit they get, without any hesitation the picketers shouted in unison "none". Apart from that, through his very spirited speech, he influences the picketers to hate the employer. This can be seen when the picketers yell "destroy the oppression"³⁸ and "rock headed boss".³⁹ Later, the leader is able to convince his friends to leave the company's premises. He says politely that they should respect the law which means that they should respect the police who act as law enforcement agents. Thus, from the words '*berpengaruh*' and '*menajamkan perhatian menunggu dengan sabar*' the idea is conveyed that the leader is influential. These are elements of good leadership that Usman wants to highlight. Here, we can see that Usman conceptualises leadership as the exercise of influence.

In this story, Usman also distinguishes between a person who is capable of being a leader and who is not by demonstrating the inability of two workers, Rosdi and Karim to give a good speech. For instance, when Rosdi begins his speech, the audience could not hear him. As a result the audience shouts: '*Kuat, cakap kuat-kuat, kami tak dengar*' (louder, speak louder, we cannot hear), '*Kuat lagi, kuat lagi*' (louder still, louder still). Similarly, when Karim turns to begin his speech the audience yells: '*Kuatlah sikit, jangan berbisik macam dalam kelambu*' (be louder don't whisper as you would under a mosquito net). Thus, voice is an important aspect in Usman's notion of leadership as the exercise of influence.

Usman portrays the picket leader as a solidly built man, thus suggesting that physical appearance is also important in a leader, implying that stoutness gives a man the look of authority. He is also a man with charisma who is able to influence his followers to obey him, in order to achieve their mission. With his personal capability, he is able to affect his followers' attitudes and actions. The effect includes a show of loyalty and

capitulation. He inspires the followers to accept and to carry out his request without any questioning and without considering personal interest. The picketers also show their respect instead of the impertinence they exhibit to the two workers who spoke. These describe Usman's concept of leadership.

Even though Usman uses the word '*terpengaruh*' in the story "*Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua*" and the word '*berpengaruh*' in "*Sebuah Khemah Didirikan*" to describe influence, from both words the degree of intensity is different. The degree of intensity of the word '*berpengaruh*' is higher than '*terpengaruh*'. In other words, '*berpengaruh*' not only describes the person as influential but also describes his credibility as a good leader. On the other hand, the word '*terpengaruh*' only describes the response of the people around the person who receives that response. It merely shows that that person is able to influence others, but it does not necessarily mean that the person is a leader. This shows that Usman is aware of the impact of using certain words to describe the concept of leadership.

iii. Leadership as a Form of Persuasion

In the short story "*Sebuah Khemah Didirikan*" as mentioned above not much is said about the chief of the police force except that he attempts to reach a compromise with the strike leader which leads to the picketers leaving the building. Even though no details of their discussion are given by the narrator, after the discussion, the picketers' leader asks his friends to leave the building. The chief of the police force has effectively convinced the leader to ask his friends to leave the premises.

Usman portrays the chief of the police force as a good leader because he is able to convince and persuade others. Again, even though the anti-riot force guards the picketers with weapons, no force is used to disperse them. The discussion between the chief of the police force and the picketers' leader alone succeeds in dispersing the picketers, even though at the beginning, some of the picketers disagree to disperse. This can be seen when some of the picketers yell: "Let the employer chase us". To emphasize that this leader did not have to use force to disperse the crowd, Usman describes him using non-violent language such as '*demi kepentingan bersama*' (for the sake of our mutual interest), '*untuk memelihara keamanan*' (to preserve peace), '*menghormati undang-undang*' (respect the law) and '*menghormati pegawai-pegawai keamanan*' (respect the security officers [police]), to show the capability of the chief of the police force to persuade the picketers. Usman seems to believe that the words '*demi kepentingan*', '*untuk memelihara*' and '*menghormati*' are relevant words of persuasion. From the scene involving the chief of the police force, Usman seems anti-violent. Here, we can understand Usman's

conception of leadership as a form of persuasion. Although influence and persuasion can be said to be the two sides of the same coin, in this scene the police chief displays the art of persuasion in a way not shown in other scenes in this story nor in other stories we have discussed. This could be said to be another new dimension of the concept of leadership put forward by Usman which has not been seen in the short stories already discussed.

iv. Leadership as Personality and Its Effects

Muslim religious functionaries are respected members of the community and are regarded as leaders in some aspects of the social lives of the Malays. Among these functionaries, some of the most influential at a local level are the '*imam*', '*lebai*' and '*ustaz*'. Among the broad categories of religious officials, the most important one is the '*imam*'. There are two types of '*imam*', one for the mosque and the other for the prayer house. The '*imam*' of the mosque is an official appointed by the government religious department, while the '*imam*' of the prayer house is usually chosen by leading members of the community. The most important function of the '*imam*' is to lead prayer sessions. However, just as the mosque and the prayer house are not used for group prayers only but also for other purposes, such as the giving of religious instructions and the holding of meetings to discuss religious and other village matters, so too the role of the '*imam*' is not confined solely to that of a prayer leader. Outside the mosque or prayer house, an '*imam*' may also be required to lead the '*tahlil*' prayer associated with various types of rites, to say prayers at the end of religious as well as non-religious ceremonies, and also to give advice on matters pertaining to Islam.⁴⁰

The '*imam*' normally received their religious education from the prayer house or '*pondok-pondok*' (small huts) or '*madrasah*', which constitute a residential school where religious knowledge is taught. The little knowledge they received however, went a long way, for at the local level they were well respected and in demand to head various religious activities. Due to the fact that they often taught religious studies including *Koran* reading, they sometimes developed a following. Their status as religious teachers gave them many social and economic advantages related to the receipt of goods and services. They could easily obtain help to do the day-to-day chores around the house or farm and people made food contributions and gave cash donations as a mark of respect as well as a way of getting their blessings.

Usman, in his short story about a traditional-type '*imam*', shows him in very unflattering circumstances. When he wrote his story in 1954, a new breed of Islamic scholars and individuals, who were better educated, had already emerged to provide

alternative leadership. At the same time Malays were much more secularised with some being more inclined to see some 'imam' as hypocrites who use their perceived religiosity for their own benefit. The negative image of the 'imam' as portrayed by Usman in the short story entitled "*Kisah Pertama*" (First Story)⁴¹ published in July 1954 is in line with this disillusionment. The story tells about Kassim's father who is appointed as 'imam' for the prayer house by the village people. The word used here is '*memilih*' (selected) to describe that Kassim's father is chosen by the village people to be the prayer leader. Unfortunately, after he becomes the 'imam', he stops going to work in their paddy field leaving it all to Kassim. In the morning, the 'imam' is either in the prayer house or in a coffee shop. When he is in the coffee shop, he will ask someone who enters the shop to buy him a cup of coffee and then he will tell stories about the Prophet and about hell. After that, he will return to the prayer house where he spends his time either counting rosary-beads or sleeping. In the afternoon, he goes home for lunch and then teaches Kassim to read the *Koran*.

The daily activities of the 'imam' in the story are being told to convey the impression of the inadequacies of the man. A slight elevation in his status changes his character and he becomes lazy and even develops pretensions of being too good to do menial tasks. Thus, he holds court in a coffee shop showing off to his audience his knowledge about the Prophet and moralising with his stories about hell. Here, Usman rejects hypocrisy particularly when it is seen in a man whose claim to leadership is his perceived high morals. Usman's stand on fake religiosity is clear. An 'imam' who sees nothing wrong in letting someone else pay for his coffee every time is seen as '*sungguh memalukan*' (very shameful). Kassim, his son is embarrassed: '*Ayahku menjadi sebagai seorang peminta sedekah. Dia akan meminta-minta sebagai pengemis*' (My father is like a beggar. He will ask like a beggar).

Usman uses the words '*sungguh memalukan*', '*peminta sedekah*' and '*sebagai pengemis*' to describe the bad behaviour of the 'imam'. The word '*memalukan*' gives an idea that it affects the prestige (*maruah*) of the person and the family. Thus, in Malay society, if someone brings shame, it not only affects the person but also the whole family. Further, when someone is described as '*peminta sedekah*' or '*pengemis*' this shows that the person is of a lower standing. Therefore, when Usman uses the words '*sungguh memalukan*' and relates them with the words '*peminta sedekah*' and '*sebagai pengemis*', this means that the prestige of the person has been lowered.

In this story, the 'imam' does not only behave badly or in a manner which is below his dignity, but he is also not as knowledgeable about Islam as he pretends to be. Kassim remarks that regarding matters on Islam '*sedikit pun tak pernah diketahuinya dengan betul*' (not even a little did he know correctly). Usman seems to question the

'*imam*'s capability as a leader: The narrator wonders how the '*imam*' could guide or lead others if his knowledge of Islam is not correct? The narrator's opinion is in line with that expressed by the Malay scholar, Nordin Selat, who stated that "a leader should be knowledgeable. If he has a broad mind, the leader could lead the followers intelligently and could solve the problem of his followers correctly".⁴² It seems to Usman knowledge is important in a leader. Therefore, from the above words such as '*memalukan*', '*peminta sedekah*', '*pengemis*' and '*tak pernah diketahuinya dengan betul*', Usman conceptualises leadership as personality and its effects.

It is revealing that Usman emphasizes good work ethics and knowledge in his story about a religious leader. It has to be noted that many religious leaders came from well to do families in the village setting who could, in the first place, send their boys away for their religious education. Yet, they too often fed off their community, living comfortably on their own wealth, their salary and the cash and food contributions, and, quite often, the free labour they received from the people. Due to the fact that the ritualistic aspect of Islam was and still remains important in Islamic societies, with some knowledge of the Arabic language, the ability to read the *Koran* by rote and some command of the rituals and prayers involved, religious leaders could, until recent times, preside with aplomb over a near illiterate rural community.

In the short story entitled "*Mulanya Dia Menjadi Mata-mata*" (Why He First Became a Policeman)⁴³ published on 19 June 1949, Yassin, a poor peasant, falls in love with Rohani, daughter of Penghulu Said. They plan to get married when Yassin has enough money for the wedding ceremony. With hard work in the paddy field and rearing some chickens and ducks, he manages to save some money. Then he asks his mother to go to Penghulu Said to ask for his daughter's hand but is told that Rohani will be betrothed to Orang Kaya Ahmad (Rich Man Ahmad). Penghulu Said is in fact lying for his daughter is not engaged to anyone, a fact that is known to Yassin's mother. Thus, the answer is given in a gentle way to let Yassin's mother down, a face saving way often employed by Malays. Deeply disappointed, Yassin goes to find a job in town where he becomes a policeman.

But it is not the '*penghulu*'s lie that Usman takes issue with. It is the fact that by saying that his daughter will be married to a rich man, he reveals his true colours and values. Thus through the narrator, Usman refers to Penghulu Said as '*mata duitan*' (money mad) and '*memilih keturunan dan harta*' (choosing descent and wealth). Here, Usman is using an idiom '*mata duitan*' which literally means money for eyes, to show greed and immorality. In Malay culture this idiom is normally directed at a woman who craves money so that when Usman describes Penghulu Said as money mad he implies that he is even more materialistic than a woman.

The words '*mata duitan*' and '*memilih keturunan dan harta*' are another way of expressing negative aspects in the concept of leadership Usman wants to put forward. To be '*mata duitan*' is a weakness in a leader. Although Usman does not talk about bribery and corruption in his story it seems obvious that he is aware of the dangers of a leader who is '*mata duitan*'. Similarly, in the words '*memilih keturunan dan harta*' are implied bias. Therefore, Usman's idea is that these two negative qualities are not appropriate in someone who aspires to be a leader. From the words he uses in the short story, Usman approaches the concept of leadership from the angle of personality and its effect. He urges that a leader should avoid these negative qualities.

Both the short stories above describe Usman's concept of leadership as personality and its effects. In "*Mulanya Dia Menjadi Mata-mata*" (1949), he uses an idiom such as '*mata duitan*' and the phrase '*memilih keturunan dan harta*' to describe his concept of leadership. However, in "*Kisah Pertama*" (1954), he uses words such as '*memalukan*', '*peminta sedekah*', '*pengemis*' and '*tak pernah diketahuinya dengan betul*'. This shows that Usman uses a variety of words and ways to describe his concept of leadership as personality and its effects.

In the two stories which touch on traditional-type leaders, Usman highlights poor leadership, citing hypocrisy, greed, a sense of self-importance and pretentiousness as the main characteristics. It may be noted that such characteristics have been emphasized by Usman in other stories, touching on the attitudes of the traditional elite and the rich in their relations with the poor. One could draw the conclusion from the consistency in his portrayal of the characteristics of the traditional elite, that Usman had very little confidence in them being good leaders, for the values they hold in life disqualify them from being the sort of leaders that he regards as suitable. In fact, through his stories he implied that such leaders had become more and more irrelevant to society.

Obviously, Usman felt that the new-style or modern leaders who had emerged in post Second World War Malaya, were more relevant and vital to the society and for that reason he placed them under his scrutiny. Among these modern leaders a new emerging force within society during the 1950s was the '*wakil rakyat*' or peoples' representative. His short stories about the '*wakil rakyat*' are not merely inspired by the newness and novelty of this individual in the socio-political landscape of Malaya during that period, but also because he realised that the '*wakil rakyat*' was integral to his ambition of generating change in Malay society.

In April 1949, the British Parliament made a commitment to Malaya's independence which was reaffirmed the following March by the British Prime Minister. When Lieutenant-General Sir Gerald Templer arrived in Malaya in early February 1952 as

the New High Commissioner, he declared that his immediate objective was the formation of a united Malayan nation. Towards this goal and that of undermining and eventually destroying the Malayan Communist Party (MCP), Templer introduced local elections, village councils and merged the War Council with the Executive Council. In April 1954, Templer announced that an early election for the Federal Council would be held in 1955, thereby indicating that Malaya was drawing closer to independence.⁴⁴

A number of people competed to win positions either in the village councils or Executive Council. Some political leaders competed not for the sake of the people and the country but more for their own and their family's benefit. Again, Usman put forward the concept of leadership as personality and its effects, as can be seen in the short story "*Pilihan Raya*" (Election)⁴⁵ which was published on 14 December 1952. Such self-seeking leaders are portrayed by the author. In this story the narrator portrays several candidates who are contesting to become the people's representatives in the Town Council. While they deliver their speeches, the candidates make many promises to persuade the village people to elect them as their representatives. The promises they make include pressuring the authorities to supply water and electricity to every home, build good roads, schools, public gardens and places where people can play games and have fun. In other words, they promise to fulfil the people's needs. Some of the members of the audience such as Pak Said, who listen to their campaign speeches are influenced by what they say. Pak Said thinks that if his house can be supplied with water and electricity as promised he will be able to buy a radio. This will mean that his daughter will not have to go to his neighbour's house any more to listen to their radio.

Even though in this story, the words '*ketua*' and '*pemimpin*' are not used by the author, it is clear that in the story he is talking about a category of leaders in society. In the story the villagers, after listening to the speeches, are struck by the fact that the candidates say bad things about each other in their speeches. For example, yesterday's speaker said something bad about today's speaker while the latter maintains that the former is wrong and accuses him of being a swindler. Every candidate praises himself and claims to be correct, good and honest. Through a woman character, Kak Limah, Usman criticizes the immoral attitude of the candidates:

Are not those who speak important people and sponsors, why then they talk bad, denigrating and slandering people, praising oneself as truthful and good, other people as not truthful, not appropriate and not honest, only he is good, honest.⁴⁶

Responding to Kak Limah's remarks a young Malay lad states:

Don't you know, madam, that in this world there is no human being who wants to say that he is dishonest, stupid, idiotic and a big liar with

an honest heart! Accusing others of dishonesty, lying with the intention of raising oneself up is lowly and contemptible; and to say that one's own self is good, honest and trustworthy by denigrating other people who are one's rivals is a vile act.⁴⁷

Here, we can see Usman using the dialogue between the two characters to criticize the '*wakil*'. Usman regards as '*suatu kerendahan dan kehinaan*' (a lowly and degrading act) and '*suatu keburukan*' (a bad thing) if someone accuses another of being dishonest and a swindler and then boasts about his own good qualities. In other words, Usman is saying that all the candidates have a bad attitude. They cannot be good political leaders. A good leader should have a good character, a good attitude and high morals because the leader has to be an example to be followed by his followers. How could the candidates become good leaders if during the elections they vilify one another and stab each other in the back?

Usman uses several words to describe the bad attitude of the leader such as: '*bercakap-cakap tak baik*' (talking bad), '*mengata-gata*' (to say unkind things), '*mengumpat*' (to slander) and '*memuji-muji diri*' (to praise oneself). He also brings home the fact that observers are left with a bad impression of the leaders which leads to the conclusion that such leaders are not suited to take the lead in society. Therefore, when Usman uses the words '*wakil*' and relates them to the words '*bercakap-cakap tak baik*', '*mengata-gata*', '*mengumpat*' and '*memuji-muji diri*', he is questioning the personality of the '*wakil*'. Thus, Usman describes his concept of leadership as personality and its effects.

There is another short story, where the narrator criticizes the '*pemimpin*' who have neglected their responsibility towards caring for the poor which also describes Usman's idea of leadership. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the story "*Ayah tak Kembali*" (Father is Not Returning Home)⁴⁸ which was published in December 1954, contrasts the condition of the life of a poor family with that of a leader in society. While the poor family suffers the cold and hunger, and is constantly enveloped in sadness, the '*pemimpin*' lives in a comfortable house unaffected by the rain and able to relax with a cup of hot coffee while reading the newspaper. During the elections '*pemimpin*' usually make promises to take care of the welfare of the poor people, even to the extent of making press statements that they will work and struggle for the sake of the people. Unfortunately, after they win the elections, they forget their promises. Through sarcasm, by comparing the difficult life of the poor with the comfortable life of the '*pemimpin*', Usman criticizes the '*pemimpin*': '*Orang-orang yang kononnya mengaku sebagai pemimpin*' (persons who presume to declare themselves as leaders) live comfortably. To Usman, such '*pemimpin*' are not true leaders for they make false promises and do not feel for the poor.

In this story, Usman uses the word '*pemimpin*' to refer to a leader of people. However when Usman uses the word '*mengaku*' in the phrase '*Orang-orang yang kononnya mengaku sebagai pemimpin*' he seems to question the credibility of the leader. This doubt is emphasised in the assertion that false promises have been made by the leaders that they will struggle for the sake of the people (*akan berjuang untuk rakyat*). Unfortunately the poor still live in poor circumstances, exposed to the cold (*kedinginan*), experiencing sickness (*kesakitan*) and even starvation (*kelaparan*). On the other hand, the leaders live in comfort and luxury. Thus, when Usman uses the word '*pemimpin*' and relate it with the words '*kononnya mengaku*' he is sneering at the falsehood of such leaders. When he uses the words '*akan berjuang*', (will struggle for) he is emphasising unfulfilled promises for the poor continue to suffer '*kedinginan*', '*kesakitan*' and '*kelaparan*'. Here, Usman is concerned about the personality of the leaders. This gives us an understanding of Usman's idea of leadership as personality and its effects. From the story, Usman highlights that because of the bad personality of the leaders, the lives of the poor have still not improved.

Usman describes his concept of leadership in yet another short story entitled "*Menyambut Lawatan Ketua Tertinggi Barisan Pemuda*" (Receiving a Visit From the Head of the Association of Youth)⁴⁹ published on 18 November 1956. The story is about a visit of a youth leader to a rural village. The narrator portrays the characters of two '*ketua*'. The first '*ketua*', that is the '*ketua barisan*', (literally, head of a line-up) is the leader of a youth parade for receiving a visit of the Head of the Association of Youth. The second '*ketua*' is the leader who visits the village. The first '*ketua*' is in charge of training the youths to form a queue and together to shout the word '*merdeka*', (independence). Usman portrays the '*ketua barisan*' as a person who is capable and efficient for he succeeds in getting about 32 youths to participate in the welcoming ceremony. Besides, he successfully puts them through their paces during the rehearsals. For instance, everybody obeys him when he orders them to shout '*merdeka*'. Usman appears to emphasize this point because the notion of leadership he wants to put across is an ability to influence others. The '*ketua barisan*' is also shown to be a patient person for he does not show any irritation when he has to go over the exercise of shouting '*merdeka*' many times because some of the young men could not pronounce the word properly. It seems that Usman, being fully aware of the state of his society, was highlighting patience as an important virtue in any leader who wants to successfully lead the Malays to a better future. Usman does not give a description of the '*ketua barisan*'.

The second '*ketua*' who is visiting the village, on the other hand, is portrayed as a person with little leadership qualities. Usman uses several words to describe this '*ketua*'. He comes with a big shining car (*kereta besar berkilat*). After inspecting a group of

youths, he delivers his speech very fast, so much so that the audience could not understand his message.

When he uttered the words which flew like bullets, fast and rapid, the words came gliding quickly out of his mouth ... they came out like a torrent of water. But because it was too rapid we had real difficulty in catching his words.⁵⁰

Usman uses several words to describe his speech such as '*peluru*' (bullet), '*cepat*' (fast), '*pantas*' (rapid), '*deras*' (quick) and '*payah*' (difficult). From these words, one gets the idea that the '*ketua*'s speech is very fast (*peluru, cepat, pantas, deras*) and could not be easily understood (*payah*) by the audience. This relates to his personality as not being an ideal leader. The importance of communication skills is again emphasized by Usman here as a mark of good leadership. Put in the context of society at that time when the burst of political activities was a relatively new feature of the political landscape, when politicians from opposing parties competed for power and when political rallies and speeches could be decisive in winning votes, communication skills were undoubtedly important. Thus, Usman reflected the special needs of the times.

The visiting '*ketua*' is also made to look silly when he, along with a journalist, falls into a paddy field. The scene is set for a comment from a school teacher present during the incident, who remarks: "Let him (the leader of the association) know how the village people wallow in mud. So far he just knows how to give orders to others to plant paddy and he only knows how to eat rice. But now he is introduced to the mud in the paddy field".⁵¹ Through the narrator's voice: '*Saya senang dengan pendapat itu*' (I am happy with the opinion), Usman agrees with the teacher's observation. The remarks made by the school teacher indicates that the visiting '*ketua*' is not respected. When Usman uses the words '*biar dia tahu*' (let him know) and '*berlumur lumpur*' (wallow in mud), he is indicating that a bad leader does not deserve sympathy and respect. When he uses the words '*tahu cakap*' (can talk), Usman is criticising leaders who give orders from a distance and from above, but do not take the trouble to acquaint themselves with what goes on below at the ground level. Thus, to Usman good leadership invites respect and esteem. The words used in this story, as shown above, capture the way Usman conceptualises leadership as personality and its effects.

To describe the leader of the Association of Youth, Usman uses the term '*ketua*' although he refers to him once as a '*pemimpin*' at the beginning of the story when the narrator mentions the preparations to be made to receive a visit from '*pemimpin kami*' (our leader) - '*ketua pemuda kami yang tertinggi*' (the top leader of the youth organisation).⁵² Here the word '*pemimpin*' is used to convey the meaning that the man is their leader, in fact, the top leader of the organisation. However in the rest of the story, Usman uses the words '*ketua tertinggi*' and not '*pemimpin*' to describe the head of the

Youth Association of Youth. When the term '*pemimpin*' is used such as in the way it is used by the narrator in the story, elements of a more personal relationship between a leader and his followers are injected into it. There is also the acknowledgement that the leader belongs to the group or organisation. But the term '*ketua tertinggi*' is a designation of the post or position held by the leader in the association. It is an impersonal title and does not convey the two-way relationship that the term '*pemimpin*' suggests. Note also that Usman does not describe the '*ketua barisan*' as a '*pemimpin*' because he does not hold a high position. In fact he is merely a village level official whose duty is to organize a small group of people to welcome the leader of the association. Nevertheless, within his own orbit he acts in the way that a good leader should.

It may be noted that Usman's prejudices against the old order or the traditional elite, inclines him in the direction of usually painting them as the bad leaders which also describe his notion of leadership. Thus, in another short story entitled "*Cerita Sebuah Rumah Batu*" (A Story of a Brick House)⁵³ published on 9 December 1956, the main character who is from the nobility is referred to as a '*ketua*', as well as a '*pemimpin*'. In the story, the '*ketua*' has the skill to build a house, an expertise which he had acquired in his training in England. He builds a big and beautiful house to accommodate his family, relatives and friends. Then, he extends the house. Unfortunately, the hot weather and rainy season begin to affect the structure of the house. The walls begin to crack and soon some sections crumble and fall to the point that the whole house nearly collapses.

Usman uses the word '*ketua*' when he describes the man as a leader of the team which built the house. However, when the house is completed and his relatives and friends live together with him and his family, Usman uses the words '*pemimpin rumah tangga*' (leader of the household), to portray his position and does not regard him as '*ketua rumah tangga*'. This gives the idea that to Usman, the term '*ketua*' is only suitable to describe someone who heads a group in order to do a certain job or execute a certain task. On the other hand, the term '*pemimpin*' implies a head of a group whose qualities of leadership are recognised by those who are being led. Thus, the aristocrat in this story is '*ketua*' to a team of people who built the house. There is no suggestion here that between the leader and the team, there is a personal relationship. But he is the '*pemimpin*' of the household made up of family members and friends who are willing to be guided by him.

In the early part of the story, the narrator describes '*ketua*' as a noble person (*mulia*) and kind (*baik*): '*baik niatnya dan baik pula maksudnya*' (kind in his resolve and kind in his intentions). The story continues with the portrayal of the '*ketua*' becoming arrogant, because he is the owner of the house as well as the acknowledged '*pemimpin*' of the extended family living under his roof. The narrator comments: '*kebanggaan serta*

kebesaran dirinya sekarang ini amat mempengaruhi dirinya' (His own pride and [sense of] greatness at the moment greatly influences him). His arrogance is shown when he disregards the advice given by his relatives and friends concerning the cracks in the house. Consequently, the house is waiting to fall.

Now...the house is only waiting to collapse, collapse from the mistakes and the weaknesses of its guardian.⁵⁴

Usman's criticism of the '*pemimpin*' is condensed in the words mistakes and weaknesses. Further the narrator is made to remark:

The owner of the house does not look carefully at it. He is absorbed with his situation, absorbed with the pride of owning a big brick house in which he is the leader of the household; furthermore his own pride and [sense of] greatness at the moment greatly influences him.⁵⁵

When Usman uses the word '*ketua*' and relates it to the word '*baik*' and the word '*pemimpin*', in conjunction with the words '*kebanggaan*' (pride) and '*kebesaran diri*' (greatness), he is concerned with the question of personality. A good leadership should be '*baik*'. On the other hand, bad leadership is shown in pride and self-delusion. The aristocrat is self-absorbed, egotistical, and the mere fact of being the head of a household and having a huge house is enough to make him feel that he is a great man. The effect of the personality of the leader is clear, for "the house is only waiting to collapse, collapse from the mistakes and the weaknesses of its guardian". Thus, in the story, Usman criticizes leaders with bad personality traits such as pride and a feeling of self-importance.

Usman is advocating humility in a leader, which judging from most of his descriptions about members of the traditional elite, is a characteristic that is rare among them. At the same time, he shows their preoccupations with trivialities perhaps to convey the message that while the country was facing serious issues, there were among the leadership group those who were more concerned with building big homes and stroking their egos.

Elected representatives, irrespective of whether they are state councillors or federal parliamentarians, are generally known as '*wakil rakyat*' (people's representatives).⁵⁶ The short story entitled "*Kacang dan Kulitnya*" (The Peanut and Its Shell)⁵⁷ was published in 1963. The title of the story is derived from the Malay idiom '*Seperti kacang lupakan kulit*' (Like the peanut that forgets its shell) which means someone who forgets his humble origin. This story describes Abdul Shukur Abd. Rahman, an immoral candidate for the position of '*wakil rakyat*' for the State Council elections. During the elections, with the help of his wife who placed her jewellery in the pawnshop, Abdul Shukor raises the funds to use during the campaign. Each time he delivers his speeches, he declares that his

intention to contest a seat in the elections is not in order to get the post as councillor or people's representative or to earn the allowances which amounts to two hundred and fifty ringgit. He stresses that he is doing it for the sake of the people. The promises made during elections and the publicity given to government programs to raise the standard of living, particularly in the rural areas, increase the expectation of the villagers that their representatives will deliver their promises. When the audience claps to show its support after his speech, Abdul Shukor is very pleased. But a few months after he is elected as a '*wakil rakyat*' or councillor, no new development is seen in the constituency he represents and his attitude begins to change.

As their expectations have not been realized, the people begin to question Abdul Shukor's integrity, trustworthiness and sense of responsibility. Meantime, the new '*wakil*' is seen wearing smart clothes, smoking a curved pipe with expensive tobacco from overseas and adopting a boastful attitude. Apart from that, he begins to look for a new wife because he feels his wife is already old and no longer attractive. He entertains such thoughts, after he is introduced to a beautiful young lady by his friend. He sends his wife with six children back to her village, and a week later, he sends a registered letter with some money enclosed informing her that she has been divorced. He then marries a beautiful young lady. Abdul Shukur also becomes more arrogant. This arrogance was already evident before his divorce. An incident had occurred while he was travelling in a car with his first wife. Aman, an Assistant District Officer, had waved his hand to Abdul Shukor but he was deliberately ignored. Abdul Shukor reasoned that, as a councillor everybody wanted to know him, but before he was elected no one looked at him.⁵⁸

Several words used by Usman to describe the character of Abdul Shukor such as '*perubahan*' (changes), '*lagaknya*' (his mannerisms), '*tidak pernah bersyukur*' (never grateful), and '*penuh nafsu*' (very lustful). The word '*perubahan*' describes Abdul Shukur's changed attitude after his appointment as a '*wakil rakyat*'. This is followed by the word '*lagaknya*', where he becomes arrogant and '*tidak pernah bersyukur*', (never grateful) or thankful to the people who voted for him. Further he does not bother to be helpful or friendly to others and worst still, he becomes '*penuh nafsu*' (very lustful) in his attitude towards beautiful young girls. Thus, all the words above relate to the '*wakil rakyat*'s personality.

These are several examples of the bad attitudes of some political leaders, as portrayed by the narrator. Before they become political leaders, candidates make beautiful promises to work for the good of the people, and they also behave kindly to them. However, after they are elected, they become arrogant and forget their promises. They begin to think more of themselves. This can be seen in Abdul Shukur's attitude. He is more concerned about himself and disregards his responsibility as a '*wakil rakyat*'.

Through the character's dialogue, Usman criticizes Abdul Shukor's attitude: '*Pedulilah. Bila aku jadi kaunselor semua kenal, kalau dulu tak ada yang nampak*' (Forget it. When I became a counselor everybody knew me, but before that no one noticed me). Usman also uses sharp sarcasm to criticize Abdul Shukor's attitude: '*Che Shukor yang tak pernah bersyukur*' (Che Shukor who is never grateful) when he marries a beautiful girl because he feels his old wife is an embarrassment for a public figure like him. Usman's criticism shows that Abdul Shukor is not an exemplary leader because "to be a good leader one must be generous, patient, truthful and trustworthy".⁵⁹ Abdul Shukor has not been trustworthy and honest with the people. He fails to keep his promise to work for the sake of the people and instead he thinks only about personal gain. Ahmad Kamar's observation that a leader should "guide and take charge of the development strategies of the group or community"⁶⁰ could be said to echo Usman's views of the question of leadership. Unfortunately, Abdul Shukor falls far short of the ideal for he is totally negligent of his responsibility as a leader to his group and community. Therefore, Usman wants to emphasize, in the concept of leadership, the importance of good behaviour and the ability to guide the followers. Here, it seems Usman wants the readers to evaluate the good and the bad in leadership.

In this short story, the words '*ketua*' and '*pemimpin*' are not used by the author even though Abdul Shukor can be considered '*ketua*' or '*pemimpin*' or '*pemimpin politik*' because normally when someone wins an election he is a leader to his people in his constituency and is considered as a leader by his followers or party. The author only uses the word '*wakil rakyat*', people's representative and '*konseler*', councillor, to describe Abdul Shukor's position. The word '*pemimpin*' might not be seen as suitable to the author in describing Abdul Shukor, because he is not a good example of a leader.

In sum, in the earliest short story in this group, "*Mulanya Dia Menjadi Mata-mata*" (1949), Usman uses the idiom '*mata duitan*' to criticize the leaders and describe his idea of leadership. However in later short stories, for instance, "*Pilihan Raya*" (1952), Usman begins to use direct words such as '*bercakap-cakap tak baik*', '*mengata-gata*', '*mengumpat*' and '*memuji-muji diri*' to criticize the leader and present his idea of bad leadership. In "*Kisah Pertama*" (1954), we can see Usman using direct criticism such as '*sungguh memalukan*'. From here, we can see that Usman begins to be more daring in his criticism of irresponsible leaders, by using several new words.

v. Leadership as a Power Relation

Usman puts forward another dimension of the concept of leadership, which can be seen in the following short stories, in which he depicts the characters of the chief of the

police force. "*Kami yang Terlibat*" (We Who Are Involved)⁶¹ published in 1958, revolves round the night patrols conducted by the police during the period of the Emergency to ambush communist guerillas in the jungle. The main scene describes the police chief arriving in the middle of the night and ordering the policemen to form into units, to undertake a night patrol after they are awakened from their sleep. The trucks and jeeps arrive and the policemen get on board followed by the chiefs and then they move off. In "*...dan Maut Mengendap di Mana-mana*" (... And Death is Lurking Everywhere)⁶² published in January 1964, Smith, the Chief of Police discusses with Corporal Haris the plan to attack the communists. Suddenly they hear an explosion and screams not far from where they are. The chief and Corporal Haris run to the place followed by Leman and find that a communist terrorist has been shot. In another scene, the chief arrives by jeep at a spot where there are houses and orders Corporal Haris to burn all the houses. The order is promptly obeyed.

The police ethos requires orders from above to be obeyed without question. As mentioned in the story "*Kami yang Terlibat*": '*kami telah menerima perintah bahawa pukul dua malam nanti kami dikehendaki berada di rumah pasong*' (we have received the order that at two o'clock tonight we are required to be at the police station). Failure to obey orders is a serious offence in any professional police or military context. Therefore, whether they like it or not, the policemen have to follow their chief's directive. The policemen follow the orders of their chief to form into units, even in the middle of the night. Here, Usman uses the words '*perintah*' (order) and '*dikehendaki*' (required) to show that the order must be obeyed.

In "*...dan Maut Mengendap di Mana-mana*" the policemen burn all the houses after they receive an order from Smith, their Chief: '*Smith mengeluarkan perintah kepada Koprak Haris dan perintah itu segera pula menjalar kepada anak buahnya*' (Smith gives the directive to Corporal Haris and the order is immediately relayed to the lower ranking policemen). During the Emergency, communist guerillas often raided homes close to the jungle in search for food or collected food from the homes of sympathisers. Thus, one of the ways the government countered this activity was to burn houses that were suspected of being the targets of these guerillas. Here, Usman uses the word '*perintah*' (order) and '*segera*' (immediately), to describe that the order is promptly obeyed by the lower ranking policemen.

The effectiveness of the police chief is depicted by Usman in "*Kami yang Terlibat*", when his orders which were '*tajam dan berkesan*' (sharp and effective), set into motion the policemen just like a vehicle which moves on its own immediately after the switch is turned on.⁶³ In "*...dan Maut Mengendap di Mana-mana*" the Chief gives the

order to burn all the houses and '*sebentar kemudian perintah itu telah dilaksanakan*' (a moment later the order is carried out).⁶⁴

Thus, the words '*tajam*' (sharp), '*berkesan*' (effective), '*sebentar kemudian*' (a moment later) and '*dilaksana*' (carried out) are used to describe the order given and the response of the policemen. Therefore, from the words used in both stories, it seems clear that Usman conceptualises leadership as a power relation. However, Usman is not advocating an autocratic style of leadership. In fact he is against it. This can be seen from the fact that the actions of the chiefs are questioned albeit behind their backs. Thus, in the scene in which the policemen are woken up in "*Kami yang Terlibat*", a few begin to feel hatred towards their leaders, to the extent that they see their leaders as their enemies who should be killed. The narrator comments:

We ourselves don't quite understand why we are so obedient, scared and always respect the orders and the person of the chief. But sometimes a feeling surfaces which is called hatred that hits at our hearts and feelings so much so the chiefs - especially those who always shout at us - we regard as enemies who we hope will not stay and be seen in front of us.⁶⁵

However, no physical action is taken by the policemen towards their leaders. But from the words '*benci*' (hatred) and the phrase '*sebagai musuh*' (as enemy) used here, it is clearly evident that Usman strongly expresses his criticism of the attitude of some of the chiefs who are too autocratic. Meanwhile in "*...dan Maut Mengendap di Mana-mana*", immediately after the chief of the policemen gives an order through Corporal Haris to burn all the houses, Mamat, a policeman, questions the order by saying '*Mengapa? Kan sayang?*' (Why? Isn't it a pity?). In other words he is quietly expressing his disagreement.

It should be noted that the chief of the police force in the short story entitled "*Tugas*" (Duty)⁶⁶ published in 1963, which was discussed in Chapter 4, is referred to as the O.C.P.D. instead of '*ketua*'. The term O.C.P.D. is a short form for Officer in Charge of a Police District. In a district where there is a Police Station, the O.C.P.D. is the most senior officer in charge. He is responsible for all the policemen under his control and he deals with the crimes in the district. In this story, Usman portrays an English O.C.P.D. setting a good example, as a leader when dealing with his subordinates.

When a policeman, Jid, issues a summons on the O.C.P.D.'s friend, he is not sure how this chief would react. The next morning, Jid is called by the O.C.P.D. through a policeman. Jid "quickly puts on his uniform. He has no time to drink the coffee prepared by his wife and no time to wave to his son and kiss his forehead".⁶⁷ When Jid is in the O.C.P.D.'s office, he '*berdiri tegak dengan disiplin seorang mata-mata*' (stood straight with the discipline of a policeman) and he sees his file on the table. Then the O.C.P.D.

begins to ask Jid about the summons he issued the previous day. Jid explains that the driver parked his car in a prohibited area. After looking at his file the O.C.P.D. says: "I like your good work. You obey the laws. I know the businessman (the driver). He has made a report to me about you issuing a summons on him. But you are in the right. Good. I want policemen to do their duty".⁶⁸

Several words are used by Usman to describe the power relation between the lower ranking policeman and his chief such as '*bergegas*' (quickly), '*tak sempat*' (no time), '*berdiri tegak*' (stood straight) and '*disiplin*' (discipline). '*Bergegas*' means to act in a hurry. The idea Usman wants to put forward here is that the policeman acts quickly when he receives an order from his chief. The words '*tak sempat*', strengthens the image of the power of the chief whose orders are immediately obeyed. Breakfast and family rituals are temporarily put aside. Here, Usman's idea that the order of the chief is more important than filling his stomach. Further, to show that the policeman has to respect the chief, Usman uses the words '*berdiri tegak*' and '*disiplin*' to describe the meeting between the lower ranking policeman and his chief. Here, Usman conceptualises leadership as a power relation.

Thus, to the narrator the English O.C.P.D. has shown himself to be a good leader. Even though the O.C.P.D. knows the car's owner very well he does not take his side. Instead he praises the good work of the policeman. This shows that the O.C.P.D. does not have any biased attitude. Usman seems to support the idea that "as a good leader, he must know that he should not be biased".⁶⁹ The policeman has done his duty and the driver should be held responsible for his unlawful action. At the same time, the leader has shown his intelligence in solving the problem with his quick action. This is another aspect of good leadership shown by Usman through the character of the O.C.P.D.

Peggy Rosenthal in her exposition of the word *meaning*, states that it can mean at least two things. By *meaning* we can mean the definition of a word: *jogging*, for example, means running at a slow, regular pace. But by *meaning* we also mean the concept or concepts carried by - or, as we usually say, "behind" - a word: *jogging* now carries the concept of good health, physical well-being, and even for some people mental well-being and peace of mind. Note that along with this concept of jogging as well-being (physical or mental) comes a positive value; the mere definition of jogging is neutral. Concepts often, as in this case, imply value: the attractiveness of jogging today seems to lie in the concepts behind it.⁷⁰

Thus, the word "O.C.P.D." means Officer in Charge of Police District, but the concept carried by or "behind" the word "O.C.P.D." is that of a leader who is respectable. This can be seen in several scenes in the short story "*Tugas*". After the policeman issues

the summons for a parking violation, the driver tells him that he will telephone the O.C.P.D. Immediately after he hears it the policeman becomes nervous. In another scene when one of his friends tells the policeman that the O.C.P.D. wants to see him, he quickly dresses up in his uniform and shows his nervousness before he meets the O.C.P.D. However, when he meets the O.C.P.D. and gives his report to him, the O.C.P.D. praises him for a job well done. In the short story "*Sebuah Khemah Didirikan*", the picketers dispersed after being asked by the O.C.P.D. because they '*menghormati pegawai-pegawai keamanan*' (respect the security officers). Therefore, the term "O.C.P.D." is not neutral but is value-laden for it carries with it the idea that he should be respected and obeyed.

In "*Tugas*", there is no mention of the words '*ketua*' or '*pemimpin*' by the author. However if a person is an O.C.P.D. then he is the '*ketua*' and '*pemimpin*' of the district police force. It is common among policemen to refer to their leaders as '*ketua*', using it as a general term to mean their superiors or to identify them by their ranks such as Inspector, A.S.P. (Assistant Superintendent of Police), D.S.P. (Deputy Superintendent of Police) or O.C.P.D.

In sum, in the above short stories, Usman uses several words to describe his notion of leadership as a power relation such as '*tajam*', '*berkesan*', '*sementar kemudian*', '*dilaksana*', '*bergegas*', '*tak sempat*', '*berdiri tegak*' and '*disiplin*'. The words he uses convey the element of respect and obedience shown by subordinates to their chiefs. To Usman, the order of the chief of policemen is regarded as sharp and effective, and action has to be taken immediately with respect and full discipline.

Conclusion

From the words Usman uses in his short stories, we are able to describe his idea of leadership. Usman begins his short story in this group by giving his idea of leadership as a focus of group processes as seen in "*Peristiwa Bunga Telur*" (1949). Then, he begins to explore several new dimensions of the concept of leadership such as leadership as the exercise of influence; leadership as a form of persuasion; leadership as personality and its effects; and leadership as a power relation. However, most of his short stories depict the concept of leadership as personality and its effects.

Usman seems more interested to examine the personality of a leader than the other aspects of leadership, probably because of his interest in the role of personality in human interaction. A close look at his short stories will show that Usman situates his main characters in circumstances that would fully project their personalities. Indeed, most of his

short stories are explorations into the personalities and moral qualities of the characters. On the question of leadership, it seems obvious that Usman regards personality as crucial to the make up of a leader. Thus, he is at pains to show how a good leader should and should not behave. We see Usman criticize leaders who are irresponsible, selfish, dishonest, untrustworthy, arrogant and lacking a social conscience. They are not leadership material and do not set a good example. In this regard, Usman is obviously critical of the traditional leaders and those who come from the elite or noble group. Usman has an unflattering perception of such leaders, a view which might have been initially shaped by his humble background. However, his own experience of the effects of bad leadership as well as his ideological belief, that there should be greater equality in society helped to harden his opinion. Besides, Usman probably resented their attitudes and saw them as oppressive, untrustworthy and irresponsible.

Usman puts across the message that leaders can come from any level of society. Even though, Osman in "*Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua*" and Ghani in "*Menentang*" are young and poor, they are shown to have noble qualities. Further, he seems to say that people have to earn respect before they can be regarded as leaders. Thus, he implies that nobility and honour are not the exclusive preserve of the traditional leaders. Besides, Usman also is against autocratic leaders which can be seen in "*Kami yang Terlibat*" and "*...dan Maut Mengendap di Mana-mana*". Usman seems to imply that giving orders and commands in an autocratic manner is not necessarily the mark of good leadership, especially if the orders are against the humanitarian standpoint of the followers.

In Malay political culture, as Kessler notes, "the leaders do not exist of themselves, simply awaiting the gathering around them of followers. Rather, it is followers, through the recognition and support that they bestow, who make leaders".⁷¹ This statement is in accord with two of Usman's short stories: "*Peristiwa Bunga Telur*" and "*Menentang*". For instance, in "*Peristiwa Bunga Telur*" at first Awang was not a leader but because his friends urge him to give a speech they begin to recognize in him qualities of leadership and one of them, Ahmad, compares his voice with that of Bung Tomo. In "*Menentang*" Ghani is just a '*pelopor*' (a pioneer), who wants to help the poor people in his village. However, later, after his friends hear his speeches, they suggest that he '*memimpin*' (lead) them. Therefore from these two scenes, the followers recognize the individuals as leaders after they have proven their leadership capability.

Usman uses several approaches to criticize the bad leaders. In "*Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua*" he describes the immoral behaviour of Orang Kaya Omar. In "*Mulanya Dia Menjadi Mata-mata*" he uses idiom to criticize the Penghulu Said as '*mata duitan*'. In "*Kisah Pertama*", Usman directly criticizes the *imam*'s immoral behaviour as '*sungguh memalukan*'. Usman uses sarcasm to criticize the '*pemimpin*' in "*Ayah tak Kembali*" and

Abdul Shukor's immoral behaviour in "*Kacang dan Kulitnya*". In addition, Usman uses the characters' dialogues to express his criticisms as can be seen in "*Pilihan Raya*".

His criticism of irresponsible leaders is an indirect criticism of Malay society. His concept of leadership thus embodies his belief, that change is needed to improve the condition of the poor and weak, and that good leaders are vital to achieving that change.

From the above analysis, it is clear that Usman writes about leaders and leadership in different areas of society such as leadership in religion (*imam*), leadership in politics (*wakil rakyat*) and leadership in village society (*penghulu*). In all the leaders he stresses the concept of leadership as personality and its effects. However, for leadership in a profession (police), he stresses the concept leadership as a power relation.

The concept of leadership which Usman develops in these stories is one which attaches importance to personal qualities such as honesty, truthfulness, a strong sense of responsibility and the ability to influence and convince followers. A leader is also one who works for the good of the people, especially of the poor, whose welfare has not been taken care of or the people who have been oppressed either by the rich or by their employers. Unfortunately, to Usman there are leaders and people who are irresponsible, inhumane and self-interest can cause others to become victims, live in misery and even die. Usman sees a direct co-relation between death and the ills in society. Death to him was a dramatic event caused by the actions of others which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Endnotes

¹ Daniel Katz and Robert L. Kahn, *The Social Psychology of Organizations*, New York: John Wiley and Sons Inc., 1966, pp. 300-301.

² J.M. Gullick, *Indigenous Political Systems of Western Malaya*, London: The Athlone Press, 1958, p. 8.

³ C.C. Brown, *The Malay Annals*, 1952, p. 163. Quoted from J.M. Gullick, *ibid.*, p. 47.

⁴ Ungku Maimunah Mohd. Tahir, *Modern Malay Literary Culture: A Historical Perspective*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1987, p. 3.

⁵ S. Husin Ali, *Malay Peasant Society and Leadership*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1975, p. 11.

⁶ *Kamus Dewan Edisi Baru*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1989, p. 966 states: '*pimpin*' means '*bimbing, dipandu, berpegang tangan*'.

⁷ *Ibid.* states: '*memimpin*' means 1. '*memegang tangan dan membawa berjalan menuju ke suatu tempat, menunjukkan jalan*'; 2. '*mengepalai atau mengetuai serta mengendalikan*'; 3. '*melatih supaya boleh bekerja sendiri*'. The word '*kepimpinan*' means '*keupayaan sebagai pemimpin*'.

⁸ S. Husin Ali, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁹ *Ibid.*

- 10 *Dewan English Malay Dictionary*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1992, p. 851.
- 11 *Kamus Dewan Edisi Baru*, 1989, p. 621 states: '*ketua*' means 1. '*orang yang tertua dan banyak pengalamannya (misalnya dalam kampung)*'; 2. '*orang yang mengepalai atau memimpin (pasukan, perkumpulan, jabatan)*'.
- 12 *Dewan English Malay Dictionary*, 1992, p. 239.
- 13 S. Husin Ali, *op. cit.*, p. 13.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 12.
- 15 Nordin Selat, *Anatomi Kepimpinan Melayu*, Petaling Jaya: Insular Publishing House, 1983, p. 33.
- 16 It was known as *Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya*.
- 17 Dr. Burhanuddin or his full name Burhanuddin bin Haji Muhammad Nor was well-known as Dr. Buhanuddin AlHelmy. Born in 1911 he died in 1969. He was a founder member of KMM (Kesatuan Melayu Muda = Union of Malay Youth) (1938) and was detained by the British in 1941 on suspicion of harbouring pro-Japanese sentiments. During the Occupation, he worked with the Japanese administration and assumed the leadership of KRIS (Kesatuan Rakyat Indonesia Semenanjung or Union of Indonesian Citizens of the Malay Peninsular) when Ibrahim Yaacob left for Indonesia in 1945. He was the second President of the PKMM and one of the prime movers of the AMCJA-PUTERA (All Malaya Council of Joint Action - Pusat Tenaga Rakyat = Centre of People's Power) coalition. For further details see Ariffin Omar, *Bangsa Melayu: Malay Concepts of Democracy and Community 1945 - 1950*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 218.
- 18 His real name was Abdullah Sani bin Raja Kechil, born in 1920 and died in 1983. He worked as a journalist before the war and was a founder member of the KMM (1938). He was detained by the British because he was believed to be the leader of a Japanese-sponsored youth group. During the war, he worked in the Propaganda Department in Ipoh, Perak. He started *Suara Rakyat* after the war, and was a founder member of the PKMM. In 1946, he became the founder President of API, the youth wing of the PKMM. For further details see Ariffin Omar, *ibid.*
- 19 Short form for *Angkatan Pemuda Insaf*.
- 20 She was a journalist. Shamsiah Fakeh was the second leader of AWAS after Aishah Ghani left the organization in 1946. Shamsiah Fakeh later joined the Malayan Communist Party and took to the jungle. See Lenore Manderson, *Women, Politics and Change: The Kaum Ibu UMNO, Malaysia, 1945 - 1972*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1980, p. 55.
- 21 Short form for *Angkatan Wanita Sedar*.
- 22 Usman Awang, "*Pengalaman Saya dalam Tahun-tahun 50-an*" in Dinsman and Sutung Umar Rs (eds.), *Sikap dan Pemikiran Usman Awang*, Petaling Jaya: Penerbit Fajar Bakti, 1983, p. 70.
- 23 Usman Awang, *Peranan Intelektual*, Petaling Jaya: Insan, 1987, pp. 5 - 7.
- 24 J. Milton Cowan (ed.), *Hans Wehr: A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1966, p. 1096.
- 25 Leadership as a focus of group processes means that the leader is a central or focal person who integrates the group.
- 26 *Utusan Zaman*, 24 April 1949.
- 27 Republic of Indonesian Revolution or *Pemberontakan Republik Indonesia* (PRI). Bung Tomo became the symbol of the *pemuda* movement in Surabaya. His symbolic value was a challenge to all organizations - the pure voice of *perjuangan*. For more details see Anthony J.S. Reid, *Indonesian National Revolution 1945 - 50*, Australia: Longman, 1974, p.57 and George McTurnan Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1952, p. 114, 163 and 265.
- 28 *Mastika*, May 1951, pp. 25-27.
- 29 "*Menentang*", p. 26, '*Hari ini banyak yang mengaku pemimpin bangsa hanya pandai memerintah orang kampung bercucuk tanam, meluaskan sawah bendang, menghantar anak-anak ke sekolah, menangkap ikan, berniaga dan lain-lain, sedang mereka belum pernah datang ke kampung melihat bagaimana penderitaan penduduk yang diperintah-perintahkan itu dalam sengsara*'.
- 30 Nordin Selat, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
- 31 *Utusan Zaman*, 7 May 1950.
- 32 Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y. Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1982, p. 334.
- 33 "*Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua*", '*telah tumbuh benih dendam pada Osman, sekadarkan menanti peluang terbuka untuk membalas dendam*'.
- 34 "*Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua*", '*Sedih, hebat, dahsyat, perlakuan-perlakuan di dalam masyarakat kita*'.
- 35 *Degup Jantung*, Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Melayu Baru, 1963, pp. 173-185.

- 36 "Sebuah Khemah Didirikan", p. 183-184, 'Saya sendiripun merasa keberatan untuk meninggalkan kawasan ini. Tetapi, saudara-saudara, kita harus menghormati undang-undang, yang bererti kita harus menghormati pegawai-pegawai keamanan yang menjalankan perintah undang-undang'.
- 37 "Sebuah Khemah Didirikan", p. 175, 'Lelaki yang berbadan gempal itu mengangkat tangannya ke udara dan pelan-pelan suara-suara gemuruh itu berkurangan dan kemudian hilang seperti diterbangkan angin'.
- 38 "Sebuah Khemah Didirikan", p. 178, 'Hancurkan penindasan'.
- 39 "Sebuah Khemah Didirikan", p. 178, 'Majikan kepala batu'.
- 40 S. Husin Ali, *op. cit.*, pp. 108 - 110.
- 41 Mastika, July 1954, pp. 38 - 40.
- 42 Nordin Selat, *op. cit.*, p. 20.
- 43 *Utusan Zaman*, 19 June 1949.
- 44 Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y. Andaya, *op. cit.*, p. 261.
- 45 *Utusan Zaman*, 14 December 1952.
- 46 "Pilihan Raya", 'Kan yang bercakap itu orang besar-besar dan penganjur-penganjur, kenapa pula bercakap tak baik, mengata-gata dan mengumpat orang, memuji-muji dirinya betul dan baik, orang lain tak betul, tak kena dan tak jujur, dialah yang baik, yang jujur'.
- 47 "Pilihan Raya", 'Tak tahukah makcik bahawa dalam dunia ini tak ada manusia yang mahu mengatakan dirinya tak jujur, bodoh, dungu dan pembohong besar dengan hati yang jujur! Menuduh-nuduh orang lain tak jujur, pembohong dengan maksud melonjakkan diri ke atas adalah suatu kerendahan dan kehinaan; dan mengatakan dirinya baik, jujur dan amanah dengan memburuk-buruk orang lain yang menjadi saingan mereka bertanding adalah suatu keburukan'.
- 48 Mastika, December 1954, pp. 44-47.
- 49 *Utusan Zaman*, 18 November 1956.
- 50 "Menyambut Lawatan Ketua Tertinggi Barisan Pemuda", 'Waktu mengeluarkan kata-kata yang sebagai peluru layangnya, cepat dan pantas, deras dan meluncur kata-kata itu keluar dari mulutnya...Keluar seperti arus. Tetapi kerana pantasnya itu sehingga kami payah benar menangkap kata-kata itu'.
- 51 "Menyambut Lawatan Ketua Tertinggi Barisan Pemuda", 'Biar dia tahu macam mana orang kampung berlumur lumpur. Selama ini dia tahu cakap suruh tanam padi dan dia tahu makan nasi sahaja. Sekarang dia kenallah dengan lumpur sawah'.
- 52 "Menyambut Lawatan Ketua Tertinggi Barisan Pemuda", 'kedatangan pemimpin kami - ketua pemuda kami yang tertinggi'.
- 53 *Utusan Zaman*, 9 December 1956.
- 54 "Cerita Sebuah Rumah Batu", 'Maka kini...rumah itu hanya menunggu datangnya keruntuhan, keruntuhan dari kesilapan-kesilapan dan kelemahan-kelemahan penjaganya'.
- 55 "Cerita Sebuah Rumah Batu", 'Pemilik rumah itu tidak begitu memerhatikannya. Dia sedang leka dengan keadaannya, leka dengan kemegahan beroleh sebuah rumah batu besar dan dia menjadi pemimpin rumahtangga itu lebih-lebih lagi kebanggaan serta kebesaran dirinya sekarang ini amat mempengaruhi dirinya'.
- 56 S. Husin Ali, *op. cit.*, p. 154.
- 57 *Degup Jantung*, Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Melayu Baru, 1963, pp. 135-142.
- 58 "Kacang dan Kulitnya", p. 138, 'Pedulilah. Bila aku jadi konselor semua kenal, kalau dulu tak ada yang nampak'.
- 59 Nordin Selat, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
- 60 Ahmad Kamar, *Malay and Indonesian Leadership in Perspective*, Petaling Jaya: Ahmad Kamar, 1984, p. 7.
- 61 *Cerita-cerita Pendek DBP*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1958, pp. 23-35.
- 62 *Penulis*, Tahun 1 Bilangan 1, January 1964, pp. 31-39.
- 63 "Kami yang Terlibat", p. 28, 'Perintah itu begitu tajam dan berkesan sehingga kami menjadi seperti sebuah jentera yang apabila ditekan sahaja pesawatnya - pesawat yang ajaib - maka berjalanlah dengan sendiri'.
- 64 "...dan Maut Mengendap di Mana-mana", p. 37.
- 65 "Kami yang Terlibat", p. 28, 'Kami sendiri kurang mengerti mengapa benar kami begitu patuh, takut dan sentiasa hormat kepada perintah-perintah itu dan kepada diri ketua-ketua itu sendiri. Tetapi kadang-kadang ada juga terasa terselit suatu perasaan yang disebut benci menampar-nampar hati dan perasaan kami sehingga ketua-ketua itu - terutama yang selalu membentak-bentak kami - kami anggap sebagai musuh-musuh yang tidak kami harapkan tinggal dan nampak di hadapan kami'.

⁶⁶ *Degup Jantung*, Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Melayu Baru, 1963, pp. 165-172.

⁶⁷ "Tugas", p. 171, 'bergegas memakai uniformnya. Tak sempat meneguk kopi yang dihidangkan oleh isterinya dan tak sempat pula melambaikan tangan dan mengucupi dahi anaknya'.

⁶⁸ "Tugas", p. 172, 'Saya suka awak kerja bagus. Awak ikut undang-undang. Saya kenal itu taukeh. Dia ada bikin repot pada saya pasal awak saman dia. Tapi awak betul. Bagus. Saya mahu mata-mata mesti ikut dia punya kerja (duty)'.

⁶⁹ Nik A. Rashid Ismail, "Kepimpinan: Ulasan Teori dan Kajiannya di Malaysia" in Abdul Halim Othman (ed.), *Psikologi Melayu*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1993, p. 39.

⁷⁰ Peggy Rosenthal, *Words and Values: Some Leading Words and Where They Lead Us*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1984, p. 7.

⁷¹ Clive S. Kessler, "Archaism and Modernity: Contemporary Malay Political Culture" in Joel S. Khan and Francis Loh Kok Wah (eds.), *Fragmented Vision: Culture and Politics in Contemporary Malaysia*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992, p. 147.

CHAPTER SIX

THE CONCEPT OF DEATH

On the level of semantics, the concept of 'death' exists in relationship to 'life'. However, 'death' both is and is not a 'part' of life; it is a 'stage' of life and the negation of life altogether (its 'other').¹ Even though death is a universal phenomenon, different societies have different definitions and acceptances towards it. There are societies that believe death to mean a shifting to a new form of life but some do not. However, the death of an individual brings sadness and sorrow to those who are still alive because death ends relationships. Usman himself experienced sadness and sorrow when his mother passed away when he was a child and when his friends who were with him as policemen were shot dead.

Usman wrote many stories which touch on death. However, an examination of these stories leads one to the conclusion that it was less due to a fascination with the phenomenon than to his aim to emphasize that death represents the climax in human suffering. In order to see the motivation and influences behind Usman's stories about death, this chapter will attempt to answer several questions such as: What is Usman's concept of death? Why does he depict this in his short stories? Finally, what is the Malay society's perception of this concept? To answer these questions, firstly, I begin this chapter by discussing several words in Malay related to death such as '*mati*', '*maut*', '*korban*', '*bunuh*' and '*ajal*'. This section will be followed by describing Usman's experiences regarding death. The main section will examine the stories which touch on death.

Definitions

In the Malay language the word '*mati*' means "lifeless, become dead, never been alive, not moving or working, inactive". When the affixes '*ke...an*' are added, the abstract noun, '*kematian*' is formed which means "about death; suffering because someone is dead or something is not working".² Besides '*mati*', there is another word '*maut*', which comes from the Arabic word meaning "to die, to perish, to lose life, become dead, to abate, subside, die down, let up (wind, heat)".³ According to the *Kamus Dewan Edisi Baru* the word '*maut*' means "die".⁴ Another Malay word, '*korban*', which also comes from the Arabic word, '*qurban*', means "sacrifice, offering, immolation, oblation; Mass".⁵ According to the *Kamus Dewan Edisi Baru*, the word '*korban*' also refers to "the animal which is slaughtered as a sacrifice on a certain day in the month of *Zulhijah* (Islamic calendar) and some of its meat is donated to the poor; the offering made

at rites celebrating the Mass; religious offering to the gods; sacrifice; a victim; to die as a result of an accident". By adding the prefix '*ber*', the word '*berkorban*' is formed which signifies a verb "to '*korban*' which gives the meaning of offering something for death; to make a sacrifice for others or for love". When the word '*terkorban*' is formed by adding the prefix '*ter*' it means "killed, destroyed (accidental)". '*Pengorbanan*' which is built on the Malay '*pen...an*' means "act of sacrificing".⁶

Another word in the group of death words is '*bunuh*' which means "kill (person), erase (words), stop (leak, fire)".⁷ The addition of '*diri*' to form '*bunuh diri*' means "to commit suicide". By adding the prefix '*mem*' to the word '*bunuh*' it becomes '*membunuh*' which means "to kill, to murder, to put out (a fire), to erase, to eradicate, to plug a leak". When the prefix '*ter*' is added to become '*terbunuh*' it means "killed (accidentally)". When the prefix '*pem*' is added to become '*pembunuh*' it means "a killer, instrument used to kill". While the word '*pembunuhan*' which is built on the Malay '*pem...an*' means "the act of killing".⁸ However, there is another word '*ajal*' which also comes from the Arabic language which means "appointed time, date, deadline; instant of death; respite, delay".⁹ In the *Kamus Dewan Edisi Baru*, the word '*ajal*' means "life limit which has been decided by God; the moment of death".¹⁰ Other Malay words which mean death are '*mangkat*', '*meninggal dunia*' and '*mampus*'. The word '*mangkat*' is regarded as '*bahasa istana*' (palace speech, special language of respect, used to refer to people of high status) which is only used to refer to the death of members of royal families.¹¹ The words '*meninggal dunia*' is regarded as spoken language (*bahasa percakapan*)¹² and the word '*mampus*' is regarded as crude language (*bahasa kasar*).¹³ It is rude for Malays to use the word '*mampus*' to refer to a death, but sometimes it is permissible when used to refer to the death of a criminal or someone who is regarded as an outcast by society.

Most of the words mentioned above can be found in Usman's short stories. He uses these words in their proper context but he also uses them to create an appropriate atmosphere. At the same time, as we shall see, Usman uses several phrases which are related to death or which describe it, which together give us an idea of his concept of death.

Usman's Encounters with Death

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Usman's mother, Halimah Abdul Rahman passed away when he was five years old. As a result, he was without a mother's love. In a talk to students of University Malaya in 1956,¹⁴ he expressed his sadness about his mother's death:

I was long ago left by my mother. She passed away when I was still little. I became an orphan when I was five years old. I felt I missed my mother very much, I longed to see her face, how I longed for her love, the love of my own mother, how I missed her caresses and her touch.

Apart from his mother's death, Usman witnessed the death of a poor person and some of his friends when he was in the Jungle Squad (Police Force). From 1947 until 1952, as a member of the Jungle Squad, he was sent to the jungle to ambush communist insurgents. He felt sad and moved when he saw several of the 'enemy' who had been shot dead, as well as some of his friends who were injured and killed.¹⁵

Thus, it is understandable that death should be an important subject of portrayal in Usman's short stories. Perhaps due to the fact that death had such a tragic impact on him, Usman's stories about death are powerful and vivid. Usman also approaches the subject of death in a matter of fact manner. He gives no impression that death is to be feared or that it is a delicate subject that has to be handled carefully. In this regard, Usman shows himself to be very much a part of the Malay cultural milieu. Malays are comfortable talking about death so that Usman's descriptions of death would not be regarded as offensive or morbid. In fact Malay-Muslims regard stories about death as a necessary reminder of the impermanency of life on earth and of the need to spiritually prepare oneself for the after-life.

In his short stories, Usman depicts death as the culmination of a circumstance or a series of circumstances. In fact his stories usually present the subject who dies as a victim of a particular circumstance or circumstances. Thus, to him death is never a fact of life whereby a human being is born, grows up, becomes old and then dies. Death occurs due to the circumstances which surround the subject or/and to the intervention of several elements or agents, not the least of which are the irresponsible and cruel actions of individuals or groups in society ranging from family members to the rich and powerful. Thus death is usually a dramatic event, the victim dying either at the end of a period of unbearable suffering or suddenly and tragically due to intervening factors or agents.

The short stories discussed below which portray Usman's concept of death will be approached by classifying them into various groups based on the main circumstances surrounding the death. It has to be noted that Usman's stories about death are difficult to categorise because of the large areas of overlap in the circumstances of death and in the intervening elements or agents which he presents. For example, the theme of the rich preying on the poor remains prominent in most of the stories below. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the categories used below will help to show the main threads of Usman's ideas and in turn provide a clear picture of his concept of death.

In essence, Usman's concept of death centres around the idea of victimisation. People die needlessly because they are the victims of either circumstances or people. Usman conceptualises death as the tragic consequence of cruelty, irresponsibility, greed, lust and other human failings although he tends to emphasise cruelty as the cause. It should also be noted that at one level he equates death with cruelty but at another more romantic level, he sees it as the end of suffering and the symbol of true love.

Many of Usman's short stories, as we have seen, are about poor people and their suffering. To him the poverty exposes them not only to hardships due to the state of deprivation they endure but also to abuse and prejudice from others who interact with them. Further, many of the perpetrators of this unfair treatment come from the other side of the poverty divide such as the nobility and the rich who lack compassion and are unwilling to help the poor. In fact these groups of people make things worse for the poor by their selfish and irresponsible actions.

Usman's stories, in which individuals become the victims of their poverty and die because of it, show how that poverty attracts circumstances which heighten the pressures and pain in the poor and hasten their death.

i. Victims of Poverty

When Usman conceptualises death he sees many facets which he highlights in his short stories from the words he uses. In one of his short stories "*Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua*" (The Fate of an Old Mother)¹⁶ published on 7 May 1950, which has already been discussed from a different perspective in Chapter 3, Usman portrays the death of a poor old woman. She is a victim of poverty, a circumstance which shapes the events leading to her death. Mak Timah finds that she has to fend for herself after her son, on whom she is totally dependent for her survival, is imprisoned. She falls ill and soon dies without seeing her son.

This is a story about how poverty puts numerous pressures on an old woman. Her son, Osman, is falsely accused by Orang Kaya Omar but nevertheless finds himself in prison because the accuser is a person with considerable influence. The accused, on the other hand, is poor. When the old woman falls ill she does not receive any assistance from the Welfare Department which Usman portrays as not really dedicated to helping the poor. In fact the narrator puts the full blame for Mak Timah's death on the Welfare Department implying that had help been given by it she would have lived. The narrator points out that "she is left without any assistance" and that "hoping to get protection from the welfare body is hopeless".

Thus two intervening circumstances, Orang Kaya Omar's accusation which makes Osman the '*korban fitnah*' (victim of slander) and a Welfare Department which is more concerned to help the rich rather than the poor, increase the distress of an already suffering woman. The narrator then portrays Mak Timah's death as a release from her suffering: "she can no longer stand the terrible suffering".¹⁷

Even though in the story the character Osman is not dead, when Usman adds the word '*korban*' to the word '*fitnah*' it seems to Usman because of '*fitnah*', someone has become lifeless. The word '*korban*' in this context is defined in the *Kamus Dewan Edisi Baru* as victim. Here, Usman wants to describe that the rich are prepared to even falsely accuse the poor which results in the poor becoming lifeless. This is the state that Osman finds himself in for as a result of the '*korban fitnah*', he suffers in jail. Thus, Usman wants to stress the danger of '*fitnah*' which may cause others to become victims. Usman wants to show the cruelty of the rich towards the poor. Therefore, from the words '*korban fitnah*' we can describe Usman's concept of death as the cruelty of the rich.

On the other hand, Usman put forward another dimension of his concept of death as can be seen from Mak Timah's death. In the story Mak Timah engages in a monologue in which she expresses her willingness to die (*biarlah dia mati*) rather than endure more suffering (*menderita*). She has given up hope and all she wants to do is to lie down, prostrate (*biarlah dia terbujur*) in her little shack and wait for her son to return before she dies.¹⁸ The monologue shows the depth of her despair. Usman uses the word '*terbujur*' (prostrate) to describe her physical state. Here, the phrases '*biarlah dia mati*' and '*biarlah dia terbujur*' describe her unwillingness to face the suffering in her life as can be seen from the words '*biarlah*'. This describes Usman's concept of death as the end of suffering.

Usman's concept of death as the end of suffering can be seen clearly from the phrase: "the soul flew and left the body that had suffered for so long..."¹⁹ Then, Rohani, Osman's fiancée, who looks after Mak Timah cries while she "hugs a lifeless body".²⁰ Instead of using the word '*mati*', Usman uses metaphorical terms such as '*melayanglah roh meninggalkan jasad*' (and so the soul flew and left the body) and '*sebujur tubuh yang tak bernyawa*' (a lifeless body) to describe Mak Timah's death. This is done by Usman because he wants the reader to be emotionally affected by Mak Timah's death and to realise that poverty can bring in its train so much pain and suffering and finally death.

Thus, while the immediate causes of Mak Timah's death might be the fact that she was distressed by her son's misfortune and also his absence and the lack of assistance from the Welfare Department, the real cause is her poverty. Poverty robs her of financial independence. Her son provides her with her daily needs and in his absence she does not

have food to eat. Her only recourse is the Welfare Department but she does not get from it the assistance she badly needs.

In this story the cruelty of Orang Kaya Omar, the rich man, emphasizes the helplessness of the poor to defend themselves even if they are in the right. The negligent Welfare Department also shows that the poor can be ignored with impunity. Thus poverty brings in its wake many handicaps that make it almost impossible for them to escape from the situation other than through death. Thus, Usman criticizes them by saying: *'kegelapan hidup yang tak mempunyai keadilan'* (the darkness of life which is unjust) and *'matanya terkilan'* (his eye aggrieved) to show the cruelty of the rich and irresponsible the staff of Welfare Department.

Although Usman tends to dwell on the moment of death here, yet his description does not create the impression that death is a horrifying experience. On the contrary, Mak Timah's sense of resignation and her willingness to die point to the fact that Usman's notion of death here is a release from suffering.

Usman depicted another dimension of the concept of death which can be seen in *"Ayah tak Kembali"* (Father is Not Returning Home)²¹ published in December 1954. Here, the story discussed from different perspectives in Chapter 3 and 5, it touches on the death of the father of a poor family. Poverty brings the family, with small children, to the brink of starvation and the father takes a piece of jewellery, that has been in the family for several generations, to pawn it in order to get some money to buy food. He goes to a shop to buy some rice and a few pieces of salted fish. He walks home in a raging rain storm and meets his death when the bank of a river collapses and he is carried away by the swift flow of the river. The next morning the village people find him lying on the river bank tightly clutching a small sack containing rice and salted fish.

The narrator comments that *'arus sungai dan arus kehidupan melahirkan kisah-kisah ini'* (the flow of the river current and the flow of life give rise to these incidents). In other words, what Usman is trying to say is that the family's poverty conveys the father to the point where the swift currents of the river carry him to his death. Thus, poverty has caused the man to meet an untimely death. The tragedy of the circumstance is heightened by the fact that his "body is found lying on a river bank" (*sebuah tubuh dijumpai tersadai di tepi tebing sebuah sungai*), the "stiffened hand still clutching tightly a small sack" (*tangan yang kaku itu masih mencengkam karung kecil itu*) and "he seems more willing to sacrifice his life than to lose the small sack containing some rice" (*Ia agaknya lebih rela nyawanya melayang daripada karung kecil berisi beras itu hilang*). Here Usman wants to show the causal link between food and life and the dreadful paradox, that it is in his effort to get the food to keep his family alive that he loses his life. Thus, abject poverty has

made a father a victim. He dies and in turn the family he leaves behind become victims too.

Usman uses the phrases '*sebuah tubuh dijumpai tersadai*', '*Tangan yang kaku itu masih mencengkam karung kecil*' and '*lebih rela nyawanya melayang daripada karung kecil berisi beras*' to demonstrate the responsibility of a father towards his family to bring home some food for them even though he has to sacrifice his life. The words '*tubuh dijumpai tersadai*', '*Tangan yang kaku*' and '*nyawanya melayang*' are used by Usman to describe of the death of a body. The words '*tubuhnya dijumpai tersadai*' and '*Tangan yang kaku*' imply that the man's death is terrible. This give an idea that his death was because something terrible happened to him. Usman ends the story by the phrase: '*arus sungai dan arus kehidupan melahirkan kisah-kisah ini*'. In other words, the causes of the death are the swift river and his poverty. However when Usman uses the words '*masih mencengkam karung kecil*' and '*lebih rela nyawanya melayang*', he describes that the father rather dies than lose a small sack containing some rice. Usman uses the words '*masih mencengkam*' and '*lebih rela*' to describe his idea of death as the symbol of true love of a father towards his family.

However, when Usman relates the words '*tubuhnya dijumpai tersadai*' and '*tangan yang kaku*' with the words '*arus kehidupan*', this give another dimension of Usman's idea of death. Here, Usman refers to the leaders who are irresponsible and fail to help the poor. Therefore, Usman's concept of death involves irresponsibility of the leaders.

In this story, Usman refers to the angel of death (*Malaikatulmaut*) who willingly comes and takes his life.²² This reference to the angel of death being eager to take the victim's life suggests that in Usman's opinion the time was not yet right for the man to go. The reference to *Malaikatulmaut* places Usman within the Malay-Muslim belief system. Yet in implying in both the above stories that death might not have happened if the circumstances were different for the two victims, Usman is apparently in conflict with the belief that the moment of death is predetermined by Allah.

Concerning to the cause of the poverty of the family, Usman criticizes the leaders whom he regards as '*orang-orang yang kononnya mengaku sebagai pemimpin*' (people who presume to have been declared as leaders) who make false promises that they will help the poor after they were elected as the leaders. Unfortunately, after their election, they are more concerned for their own self-interest than in helping the poor.

In sum, Usman uses several words in his short stories to describe his concept of death. In "*Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua*" (1950), he uses words such as '*korban fitnah*', '*mati*'

and '*melayanglah roh meninggalkan jasad*'. Meanwhile in "*Ayah tak Kembali*" (1954), he expands by using several words such as: '*tubuh dijumpai tersadai*', '*tangan yang kaku*' and '*nyawanya melayang*'. However both stories imply death because of poverty.

ii. Victims of Male Abuse

Victimisation of the poor takes various forms and when the individual who is poor happens to be a woman, sexual abuse can easily come into the equation. Usman's sympathies for women's causes have been shown in his criticism of the application of Islamic marriage and divorce laws. Thus, it is not out of character for him to show that he is acutely aware of the abuses inflicted on women by men in several of his short stories which touch on death.

In the short story entitled "*Haslina, Perawan Kesayangan Kampung Kami*" (Haslina, the Darling of Our Village)²³ published in May 1955, Usman describes several deaths. First of all, Haslina's father is described as having died during the Japanese Occupation followed by her brother who died during the Emergency. Finally Haslina commits suicide.

After the death of the male members of the family, Haslina and her mother have to fend for themselves. Her mother works at a palace of a royal family. One day, Haslina's mother falls ill and Haslina is sent to take over her job in the palace. While Haslina works in the palace, several members of the royal family rape her. After these incidents, Haslina goes into a deep depression. She spends a lot of time alone sitting by a pond. She considers herself inferior because she has been defiled. She entertains thoughts of exacting revenge but her soft heart does not allow her to do so. Finally she decides to commit suicide by drowning herself in the pond.

In this story, Usman shows the cruelty of a royal family and the abuse that a woman can be subjected to. He directs his criticism at the Malay ruling classes in general showing that he detests them. He shows that Haslina dies because she became the object of their lust.

Haslina dies - the victim of the savage lust of the royal children of the palace, the nobility - the feudal group - whose soul and character are extremely contemptible.²⁴

(*Haslina meninggal - korban keganasan nafsu anak-anak raja istana, golongan bangsawan - golongan feudal - yang terlalu hina jiwanya dan peribadinya*)

In the above phrase, Usman uses the words '*korban keganasan*' which give an understanding of Usman's idea of death. The root word of '*keganasan*' is '*ganas*' meaning savage which normally refers to a wild animal killing other animals. The word '*keganasan*' means ferocity. When Usman uses the word '*keganasan*' he means that something cruel has been done. Therefore when he uses the word '*keganasan*' to '*korban*' he gives an idea that the cruelty of someone has caused another to become victim. In this story, Usman refers to the royal family whose cruelty has caused Haslina to become a victim. By using these words, Usman hopes to stir the readers' emotions and blames the royal family for Haslina's death.

The words above uttered by the narrator are significant for they mark the only time that Usman directs his criticism at royalty. In this story he goes on through the narrator to describe royalty as possessing an extremely contemptible soul and character (*terlalu hina jiwanya dan peribadinya*) and that they come from a line that in reality is very ill-mannered and base in their spirit (*keturunan yang sebenarnya sangat biadab dan rendah jiwanya*). This is a direct and open condemnation of the Malay upper classes. Usman does not hide or disguise his contempt here as he often does in many his stories.

In a revised version of the same story entitled "*Haslina*" (Haslina)²⁵ published in 1963, he does not refer to royalty but instead substitutes the word nobility for royalty. He also does not directly condemn the nobility but, through the narrator, employs sarcasm with capital letters as can be seen below:

HASLINA DIES - THE VICTIM OF THE SAVAGE LUST OF THE CHILDREN OF THE NOBILITY [PEOPLE] WHO ARE THE MOST RESPECTED AND HONOURED IN THIS WORLD.²⁶

(HASLINA MENINGGAL - KORBAN KEGANASAN NAFSU ANAK-ANAK BANGSAWAN YANG TERHORMAT DAN TERMULIA SEKALI DALAM DUNIA INI)

As in the original version, Usman uses the words '*korban keganasan*' to describe his concept of death. However in this version, from the words he uses, the concept of death is not the cruelty of the royal family, but rather death is caused by the cruelty of respected people. This can be seen from the words '*anak-anak bangsawan yang terhormat dan termulia*'. In other words, Usman wants to show that the death of Haslina is because of the cruelty of those who are the most respected and honoured people in society as can be seen from the words '*terhormat*' and '*termulia*' in the phrase. As the result of '*keganasan nafsu anak-anak bangsawan*' (the savage lust of the children of the nobility), Haslina becomes a '*korban*' (victim).

The change from royal family to noble family is interesting in that it reflects political realities in the country. When Usman first wrote the story in 1955, Malaya was

still under British rule. However, the new constitution of independent Malaya provided for the special position of the Malay Rulers for it recognised,

the Rulers as constitutional monarchs. Loyalty to a ruler is an established norm in any constitutional monarchy. In fact, loyalty to a ruler in such a system implies loyalty to the constitution, to the values enshrined in that constitution and to the people from whom the constitution derives its authority.²⁷

Furthermore in 1961, the government began to exercise greater control of the press as evident from the fact that *Utusan Melayu*'s workers went on strike at this stage to protest against journalistic restrictions among other demands. The government had begun to guard against criticisms of the establishment. It is therefore in this context that the changes made in the story should be seen.

Usman's antagonistic attitude to the upper classes inclines him towards choosing members of these classes as the villains in his stories. But it is also his way of attacking old values and old ways of thinking which to him were obstacles to the change he desired in society. That women so easily become victims is because the values of society allow those who are well placed to do as they please. Usman puts the blame squarely on the royal family for the cause of Haslina's death as stated at the end of the story.

When writing about Haslina's death, Usman uses several euphemisms such as '*Haslina tidak ada lagi di dunia ini*' (Haslina is no more in this world), '*dia mengambil keputusan menamatkan hidupnya*' (she decides to end her life) and '*Haslina meninggal*' (Haslina passed away). All these euphemisms are indirect ways to say the word '*mati*'. Even though Haslina commits suicide, Usman does not write '*Haslina bunuh diri*' (Haslina commits suicide). This gentle way of describing her death reflects Usman's sympathies for the victim and indicates that he sees the fault does not rest with her. This can be seen from the words '*tidak ada lagi di dunia*', '*menamatkan hidupnya*' and '*meninggal*'. This describes Usman's concept of death as injustice in society where a woman becomes the victim of male abuse. This can clearly be seen in the story where after she has been raped, she wants to take revenge as mentioned by the narrator: "She wants to take revenge. She wants to take revenge, hatred from all her feeling towards all men".²⁸

Here we can see Usman looking at the notion of death from a different perspective. Now, he sees social injustice as the cause of someone's death. He refers to the poor who become the victims of the rich and the respected people. Usman could have concluded the story differently. He could have described Haslina making a decision to courageously continue with her life, despite being raped. But this would not emphasize

the irresponsible behaviour of her rapist. Usman chooses to describe a terrible and sad death and thus shock the reader.

It is very rare for Malays to commit suicide because it is prohibited by the Islamic religion and suicide is regarded as a very grave sin. It is stated in the *Koran* : "And do not commit suicide, for God loves you dearly".²⁹ According to one version of the *hadith* (traditions of the Holy Prophet), the Prophet said: "Anyone who commits suicide with any object on this earth will be punished with that object on the day of judgement".³⁰ The rationale is that one's life belongs to Allah. Allah gives life and death to someone and it is not for any person to decide whether to live or die. It is clear that by describing a suicide, Usman is going against the taboos of society as well as his religion. There is no doubt here that Usman wants to emphasize the torment that Haslina went through which led her to end her life.

Haslina is first and foremost the victim of rape, but having been raped, she then becomes the victim of the values of her society. Note that Haslina is said to feel inferior because she has been raped and it seems it was her fear of being humiliated and looked down upon by society that drove her to suicide. This is a reflection of the values of society, for a raped girl becomes tainted and is treated like an outcast. She is almost unmarriageable. As intended by Usman, a reader could imagine the bleakness of her future and although Islam does not permit taking one's own life, yet it is hard to look upon Haslina's suicide as a stigma against her. It is sympathy and horror that a reader feels for the victim.

There is another short story which describes Usman's concept of death. The short story entitled "*Matinya Seorang Perempuan*" (The Death of a Woman)³¹ published in June 1959, portrays Minah, a mentally ill widow who is killed. The narrative begins with some village people discussing Minah's character. It seems she has the tendency to use obscene words in public. But no one is offended by her behaviour. One day, Minah meets Majid, Che' Leman's son and implies that she is having an affair with the father. This she does by remarking that her relationship with Majid's father is like that between his father and his mother. When Majid returns home, he relates the incident to his mother and causes a quarrel between the parents. A week later, Majid hears that Minah had been found unconscious in an empty house. Her clothes had been torn and she was almost naked. Even though no one knows who was responsible for attacking Minah, a rumour spreads that Che Leman had paid someone to intimidate her.

A few years after this incident, Minah is in the limelight again. She wants to exact revenge on the people who had treated her badly, but she fails in her intentions. Minah becomes insane. During her mad spells, she always utters Che Leman's name: "...I want

to find a man like Che Leman", "Che Leman... yes Che Leman. Do you all know Che Leman ?", "Che Leman is my husband. I have slept with him, just the two of us together" and "Come here Che Leman, come, come here". This embarrasses Che Leman. Eventually, Minah is found drowned in the pond in front of the prayer house. Che Leman has murdered her.

There is a strong hint in this story, which is never resolved, that Minah, a woman who is not mentally stable, has had an affair with Che Leman. The suggestion of abuse is present here in view of the fact that Minah is not in full control of her actions. The abuse is taken a step further when there is suspicion that hirelings were sent to intimidate her. The fact that she is later found almost naked and with her clothes torn off once again suggests that rape is involved. The change from mental instability to raving madness, suggests extreme trauma. Finally, she is found drowned and the suspicion is that she was murdered.

Again, Usman paints the rich as villainous. Che Leman is a rich person as indicated by Minah who tells Majid: "You are the son of rich parents. Your father has money" (*Kau anak orang senang. Ayahmu ada wang*). We know that Che Leman is also a respectable person for the narrator mentions that "Father's position becomes even higher and more respectable" (*kedudukan ayah semakin tinggi dan terhormat*) and Majid refers to him as "Che Leman, my respected father" (*Che Leman, ayahku yang terhormat*). Majid, the son, exposes his father out of his disappointment at his behaviour.

Father himself came to the village at night and he looked for Minah.
Father found Minah at the prayer house. And the next day people found
Minah's corpse with eyes wide open in the big pond.³²

Majid throws scorn on his father criticising him for his savagery despite being a respected man: '*kebuasan Che Leman, ayahku yang terhormat itu*' (the savagery of Che Leman, my father who is respected). Usman's use of the word '*kebuasan*', which is usually reserved for wild animals, is deliberate for he wants to show that Che Leman's behaviour is no better than that of a wild beast.

The story ends with Majid noting that: "father's status becomes much higher and people's regard for him also increased (*semakin tinggi kedudukan ayah dan semakin tinggi pandangan orang kepada ayah*). Thus, a rich man literally gets away with murder. The message that Usman wants to convey is of the injustice of the system and how position and money determine favourable outcomes for the person possessing them.

When describing Minah's death several phrases are used by Usman. The phrases are: '*Dia dijumpai mati di kolam*' (She was found dead in a pond), '*Dia mati lemas*' (She drowned) and '*Minah mati dibunuh*' (Minah was murdered). The phrases '*mati di*

kolam', *'mati lemas'* and *'mati dibunuh'* portray the terrible tragedy that happened to Minah - death by drowning. The sense of horror is captured in the words *'dibunuh'* (killed). This demonstrates the cruelty of the rich and respected man who is prepared to kill a woman who is mentally ill by drowning her in the pond. Here, Usman does not use the word *'meninggal dunia'* because he wants to show that Minah was killed with brutality. Thus, from the words used by Usman, it describes his concept of death as the cruelty of the rich and respected man. By using these words, Usman hopes it will enhance the emotional effect of horror in the reader, and that the reader will be shocked by Che Leman's cruelty.

In the above short stories, Usman uses a variety of words to describe his concept of death. It seems there are some changes of words, for instance, in *"Haslina, Perawan Kesayangan Kampung Kami"* he uses the words *'korban keganasan'*, *'Haslina meninggal'*, *'Haslina tidak ada lagi di dunia'* and *'menamatkan hidupnya'*. Meanwhile in *"Matinya Seorang Perempuan"*, Usman uses the words: *'Dia dijumpai mati'*, *'Dia mati lemas'* and *'Minah mati dibunuh'*. In the first short story, Usman uses euphemisms to describe the death of the victim but in the second short story, he uses very direct words to describe the death. This change is relevant to the context of the incident in the story.

There are some interesting contrasts between the stories. In the first story there is a gap between the rape and Haslina's death which shows a gradual progression, whereas the second story is told for immediate impact. Further, the first story is designed more to elicit sympathy for Haslina at the point of death while the second is to draw condemnation of Che Leman as the man who deals the final blow that ends Minah's miserable life.

In both stories, Usman uses a pond as the place where the victims die. Apart from the fact that a pond is a familiar location in a village scene, perhaps he sees death by drowning as the least violent of all deaths through unnatural causes. It is also significant that in his stories about rape victims he 'kills' the female characters involved. This clearly can be seen from the title of *"Matinya Seorang Perempuan"*. It is almost as though Usman wants to spare them the suffering that they would have had to endure had they lived. Thus, death is the best course for them because in death they are freed from the prejudices of society.

While the above stories are about deaths caused by the rich and powerful because of their cruelty, the stories that follow below are about deaths caused by greed and materialism.

iii. Victims of Materialism

Usman's socialist leaning influences him to be against materialism and the symbols of that materialism. The stories below are about the various manifestations of materialism and the cruel consequences of it.

In the short story "*Bila Dara Sudah Pergi*" (When a Girl has Passed Away)³³ published in November 1954, Dara, a young woman, dies after she is knocked down by a car driven by a rich man. The first part of the story takes the form of an exchange of love letters between a couple, Uda and Dara. In the letters, the couple express their love and longing for each other. There is a sign of Dara's impending death for in one letter she mentions her cousin's death. She shows her '*tabiat*' (unusual act or premonition),³⁴ by foreshadowing the tragedy.

In the last part of the story, Uda mentions how Dara dies. It happens as she is walking on the roadside. Suddenly a big and beautiful car knocks her down and she is killed instantly. Dara's death saddens Uda and every time he goes to Melaka, he visits Dara's grave. To him, Dara's tombstone is the symbol of people's cruelty which he feels is due to the car driver looking down on the poor.

When describing Dara's death, Usman uses a variety of words such as '*meninggal dunia*' (passed away) in the phrase "Dara passed away due to a road accident" (*Dara meninggal dunia oleh kemalangan jalan raya*) and the word '*mati*' (die) in the phrase "She dies instantly" (*Di situ juga dia mati*). Thus, Usman uses both polite and impolite terms to mean death. However, the words used by Usman are both suitable when seen in their proper context. Using the phrase '*meninggal*' instead of '*mati*' when talking about instantaneous death is not appropriate for it does not create the proper atmosphere and impact that Usman desires, for the phrase "to leave the world" gives the impression of something happening in slow motion. Other phrases are used which more indirectly mention Dara's death such as '*setelah dia menjadi mayat*' (after she becomes a corpse), '*setelah sekujur tubuhnya menjadi kaku*' (after her prostrate body stiffens), '*setelah nafasnya berhenti*' (after she stops breathing), '*darahnya berhenti*' (her blood stops flowing), '*mukanya amat pucat*' (her face is very pale) and '*bibirnya terkatup erat*' (her lips are shut tight). Here, Usman uses euphemisms and dwells on the death scene to show that a young girl whose future held so much promise and hope was robbed of it.

In the story, Uda describes the car driver as complacent and arrogant using phrases such as '*senang kehidupannya*' (comfortable is his life), who drives very fast '*hanya semata-mata membangga kebesarannya*' (solely to show off his greatness). Further, the rich always look down on the poor (*selalu memandang kecil*). The car which

is a symbol of the materialistic values of the rich kills Dara. Uda regards the driver as cruel (*begitu kejam*) for having destroyed his relationship and sees Dara's tombstone (*nisannya*) as a '*simbol dari kekejaman manusia*' (symbol of human cruelty).

When Usman uses the words '*mayat*', '*tubuhnya menjadi kaku*', '*napasnya berhenti*', '*darahnya berhenti*', '*mukanya amat pucat*' and '*bibirnya terkatup erat*' he wants to describe the condition of the dead body of the young girl. However when Usman relates her tombstone with the symbol of human cruelty, we can clearly see Usman's concept of death as the cruelty of the rich. This can be seen from the words '*nisannya*' and '*kekejaman manusia*'. This again gives the perception that to Usman the rich are always being cruel to the poor. When Usman uses the word '*nisannya*' he means that beneath it lies the body of a young girl. Usman uses the word '*kekejaman*' to describe the cruelty. Here he refers to the rich.

As a result of this incident, Usman criticizes the rich as people '*hanya semata-mata membangun kebesarannya*'. In other words, he regards the rich as arrogant and egoistical with their richness. In the 1950s not many Malays owned cars so that a car was a very powerful symbol of wealth and the new materialism. The considerable wealth of the man can be grasped from the fact that his car is big and beautiful. Thus, he flaunts his wealth by driving fast to attract attention as suggested by Uda in the story. As a consequence Dara dies, a victim of a man who is trying to show off.

Another short story which addresses the theme of death as a result of human greed, is "*Uda dan Dara*" (Uda and Dara)³⁵ published in March 1956. As mentioned in Chapter 3, this story describes the love between Uda and Dara and describes Usman's concept of death as true love. Unfortunately, Dara's mother refuses to accept Uda because he comes from a poor family. To her Uda is not suitable for her daughter because they are not of the same status. This crushes Uda's hopes and he decides to get a job in town where he works hard to earn enough money to be able to marry Dara. Meanwhile, Dara is forced by her mother to become engaged to a millionaire. Uda, in the meantime falls ill and on this death bed he expresses to his mother his desire to see Dara. Unfortunately, Uda dies minutes before Dara arrives.

Dara arrived a few minutes late. At that moment when the moon hovered sadly, [and] the owl still sounded its melancholic appeal, Uda passed away, his eyes half open, indicating his disappointment at not seeing Dara.³⁶

Dara is left to pine for Uda. She thinks of him always and cries often. She grows thinner and thinner. Even though Dara's mother spends a lot of money to cure Dara, it does not work. Finally, the night before her wedding, Dara closes her eyes for ever. Dara dies of a broken heart. Even though Dara's mother is filled with remorse, the narrator

remarks that "it is too late" as in the Malay adage: '*Sesal dahulu pendapatan, sesal kemudian tak berguna*' (To regret beforehand is to gain, to regret afterwards is of no use). Here, Usman appears to remind the rich to think carefully before they take any action so that it will not bring a harmful effect. Usman also criticizes the rich for looking at marriage as a financial arrangement implying that wealth does not necessarily bring happiness in a marriage.

When describing the deaths of Uda and Dara, Usman uses full dramatic powers including a description of bad weather. For instance, before Uda passes away, Usman portrays the moon hovering sadly (*bulan mengambang sayu*) and the owl still hooting its melancholic appeal (*pungguk masih merayu mendayu-dayu*). An almost similar description is used when Usman describes the atmosphere before Dara passes away. Before Dara closes her eyes for ever, the wind blows softly (*angin sepoi melambai*) and the owl hoots melancholically (*pungguk mendayu rayu*). Even the elements and the owl show their sorrow at the passing away of the two lovers. Malays believe that the elements and the flora and fauna give signs to herald certain events. This is part of a body of superstitions still believed in Malay society. Thus, the owl is believed by the Malays as a portent of bad news, particularly, impending death.

In the story, Usman also describes another Malay superstition namely, that when someone passes away with his eyes half open, it shows that the person is aggrieved (*terkilan*) because his needs have not been fulfilled. This happens to Uda, for he dies with his eyes half open because he could not meet his lover Dara. Therefore there is a belief that when someone dies with the eyes half open, the eyes are closed by slowly pushing down the eyelids to symbolise that the wish has been fulfilled.

Usman also uses poetic language to express the deaths of Uda and Dara. For example to describe Uda's death, he uses the phrase '*putuslah nafas Uda*' (Uda's breath was cut off). When Dara passed away, Usman uses the orientational metaphor: '*Dara pun menutupkan matanya untuk selama-lamanya*' (Dara closes her eyes for ever). Most of the metaphors in this short story have to do with spatial orientation: up-down, in-out, front-back, on-off, deep-shallow, central-peripheral. These spatial orientations reflect the fact that our bodies function as they do in our physical environment. Serious illness for example, forces someone to lie down physically. When someone dies, he or she is physically down.³⁷ Thus, Dara closes (shuts down) her eyes for ever. Dara's eyes refers to the on-off situation. It also represents brightness on the one hand and darkness on the other. And darkness implies sorrow.

In the story, Usman uses the phrase '*rezeki, tanah kubur, maut dan pertemuan di tangan Tuhan. Tuhan berkuasa atas segala-galanya. Kita hanya merancang, Tuhan yang*

menentukan' (Fortune, the grave, death and meeting [marriage] are in the hands of God. God has power over everything. We only design but God determines) indicating that he believes in predestination. Yet he is inclined to blame Uda's death on human behaviour: *'Uda pergi, meninggalkan dunia membawa kekecewaan'* (Uda left the world because of his disappointment). Here, when Usman uses the phrase *'Uda pergi, meninggalkan dunia membawa kekecewaan'* it describes Uda's disappointment in not being able to marry Dara. In other words, it portrays the true love of Uda for Dara where he still loves her until he dies. Usman relates the words *'meninggal dunia'* with *'membawa kekecewaan'*. Thus, we can see that because of true love, Uda takes his disappointment with him to his grave. This describes Usman's concept of death as true love.

When Uda left the village to find work in town it seems he was full of hope that he would be able to earn enough money to convince Dara's mother that he was worthy of her expectations. Thus money was the key to the problem and the fact that Dara was later betrothed to a very rich man shows that her mother placed much emphasis on wealth. The young lovers became victims of materialism.

In July 1962, Usman wrote the short story "*Harga Hidup*" (The Value of Life)³⁸. The story is about a couple who work hard to earn more money. Tahir is a clerk who earns enough income to support his family. But the couple want more money so that Tahir agrees that Mah, his wife, should also work. He buys a sewing machine for Mah to make clothes to earn the extra income. They believe that money will bring happiness and prosperity in life. Mah works until late at night, even though she is pregnant. Tahir does not bother to take his wife for a medical check up.

Only a few days after giving birth, Mah resumes her sewing, while Tahir is busy doing part-time teaching to earn more money. Their baby becomes ill because they have neglected to immunise her. Eventually the baby dies. Tahir then meets Wak, a grave digger and is surprised when he learns that Wak lives by a principle that is totally different from his. Wak works when he wants to. When Tahir gives five dollars to Wak to dig a grave he refuses to take the money. Tahir realizes that Wak believes that happiness and prosperity in life is satisfaction of the soul and a life free from the influence of money. He believes that money will not give freedom to human beings. On the contrary, "money will tie down human beings, control and make them subservient".³⁹

In this story Usman clearly rejects outright materialism and asserts that money cannot buy happiness. In fact he sees money as a burden for a person for it binds and controls him. Thus the baby's parents are so blinded by their pursuit of money that they neglect their baby. The narrator describes the baby's condition. It has a terrible cough and its eyes have a vacant expression. Later the baby develops a high fever. Then the baby's

throat becomes red and swollen blocking the respiratory organ. The description given by the narrator shows the seriousness of the baby's condition thus highlighting the parents' greediness and irresponsibility.

When describing the death, Usman uses several words and phrases. For example, to criticize the parents, Usman uses expressions such as "It is no use looking up [to see what hit you] after you knock into something, a broken thread can be joined, a torn cloth can be sewn [mended], if a life is lost where does one find it [how does one replace it?]" (*untuk apa sudah terantuk baru tergadai, tali putus dapat disambung, kain robek boleh dijahit, nyawa tercabut ke mana di cari?*). The phrase '*nyawa tercabut*' (life comes out forcefully) is a "poetical" metaphor. This expression aptly describes the cruelty of the parents. The parents are depicted as responsible for their child's death. The other "poetical" metaphor used by Usman is in regard to the dead body lying on a bed covered with a shroud (*sebuah tubuh kecil terbujuj terahap*). The use of '*tubuh kecil*' (small body) to show that it is a small baby who has died stresses the gravity of the 'crime' that the parents have committed. The phrase '*terbujuj terahap*' (prostrate [stiff] and shrouded) completes the portrayal of the child who became a victim of his parents' lust for money. Usman has chosen disturbing metaphors to describe the death of the baby. From the above phrases, we can describe Usman's concept of death as resulting from the cruelty of the parents.

Usman criticizes the parents by drawing attention to the principle of a grave digger, Wak, who believes that "happiness in life ... comes from spiritual satisfaction and freedom from the influence of money".⁴⁰ Tahir finds wisdom in the most unlikely place and the narrator comments at the end of the story that "he feels small after meeting the grave digger who before this he regards as a person of no consequence".⁴¹

In the story the expression '*sudah kehendak Tuhan*' (it was God's will) is used by an old lady to comfort Mah which implies that she should not blame herself as everything is determined by God. Here, Usman is referring to the Malay-Islamic belief in '*qadak*' and '*qadar*' which means that "Allah has, from eternity, predetermined and decreed everything, good as well as bad, believers and unbelievers, and everything that has been or will be depends entirely on His fore-knowledge and sovereign will".⁴² But Usman himself stresses negligence, greed and irresponsibility on the part of the parents for the death of the baby. Usman thus gives an interpretation of '*qadak*' and '*qadar*' which is gaining increasing acceptance among modern-minded Muslims namely that "God will not change a person's fate if that person himself will not change his own fate". In other words human beings must not be fatalistic but must take control of their own destinies.

What we can see from the three stories is that Usman uses a variety of words to describe his concept of death. For instance in "*Bila Dara Sudah Pergi*" (1954), Usman uses words such as '*meninggal*', '*mayat*', '*tubuhnya menjadi kaku*', '*napasnya berhenti*', '*bibirnya terkatup erat*' and '*nisannya*'. In "*Uda dan Dara*" (1956) he uses the words '*meninggal dunia*', '*tanah kubur*' and '*maut*'. Meanwhile in "*Harga Hidup*" (1962) he uses '*nyawa tercabut*' and '*terbujur terahap*'.

The three stories which relate death to materialism are intended to show how the corrupting influence of money can lead to death. Here as in the other circumstances of death that we have seen, Usman emphasizes the fact that people need not meet with untimely deaths if the circumstances were changed. Thus, Usman repeatedly expresses his belief that death is not preordained.

vi. Victims of Violent Conflict

It may be noted that although Usman appears to advocate a violent overthrow of a society that is corrupt as mentioned in Chapter 5 in his short stories set in the period of the Malayan Emergency, he clearly shows that he is concerned about the fact that violence produces victims and that people die needlessly.

"*Kami yang Terlibat*" (We Who Are Involved)⁴³ published in 1958 is about a group of policemen on night patrol in the jungle to ambush communist guerillas. As usual, on the way to the jungle, they load their weapons and prepare to attack. While tracking, suddenly they hear sounds of shooting and they quickly fall down on the ground to find hiding places. Then firing breaks out. When the shooting stops, they discover that Dol, Corporal Limat and an older policeman, Wak Berahim have been killed and two other policemen are injured. Then they realize that there has been a terrible mistake for the battle has been between two squads of police and not with the enemy.

The victims of this incident are policemen because they have made a mistake: they have been shooting at each other. As the narrator comments: "they died by our own hands, with our weapons, with our bullets, given to us to kill other people - people we do not know".⁴⁴ This describes Usman's concept of death as cruelty of human beings. As noted by Professor Virginia Hooker:

The narrator is emphasizing the men's ignorance about their mission, and the example of the fatal error which has just occurred prepares the reader for the narrator's conclusion that the conflict will continue and that the loaded game with death will continue to be played.⁴⁵

Here, through the narrator, Usman wants to reveal that the policeman's life is tied to death. In order to earn a living to support their families policemen are constantly exposed to the danger of death:

Our friends who are now pledging their souls, gambling with a life of which there is only one[,] for the lives of all family members, for the family. It is nothing more than that. And when they die, that death is solely for their wives and children!⁴⁶

Thus the sacrifice is enormous and at the end of the story the narrator wonders if it has all been worthwhile.

And we who are bound/involved?
Play with death ... only for a mouthful of rice.⁴⁷

Here, we can see Usman's use of several words concerning death such as: '*mempertaruhkan jiwa*', '*memperjudikan nyawanya*', '*mati*' and '*kematian*'. The words '*mempertaruhkan jiwa*' and '*memperjudikan nyawanya*' give an idea that the policemen have to pledge their souls and gamble with life for certain reasons. This means the policemen have to gamble with their lives in their risky mission. However, when Usman relates the words '*mati*' and '*kematian*' to a mouthful of rice it gives a clear picture that if they die, they will die for the sake of their wife and children. This can be seen in the phrase that they play with death (*maut*) for a mouthful of rice. Here we can see Usman's idea that the policemen are involved in the mission for the sake of the family they have to support. This gives a clear understanding of Usman's concept of death as love for one's family.

Usman's concept of death as love for one's family can clearly be seen in the following phrase: "If I die, my children will become orphans. My wife will become a widow. They have to live in difficulty. My wife will have a big responsibility. She has to earn a living, for her children".⁴⁸ This gives an idea of a policeman's concern and fear for the future of his family when he dies. Here, Usman conveys the fact that when a policeman dies, he is not the only victim of the violence for it claims in its wake many more victims especially families which are left behind. Thus, to Usman, death will bring sadness to the family left behind.

Usman's cynicism comes through when he comments through the narrator that after a death "everybody will express their sadness, the very important persons in the country will deeply express their sorrow. That is all".⁴⁹ From the phrase "That is all" (*Hanya itu sahaja*), we can see Usman's disappointment especially with the attitude of the leaders and authorities. Add to that the fact that "they [policemen] died by our own hand, with our weapons, with our bullets, given to us to kill other people, people we do not know"⁵⁰ and the futility of what the policemen are doing is brought home to the reader.

This shows another dimension of Usman's idea of death. From the words '*mati*' and '*membunuh*', it shows that human beings cause other human beings' death. This can also be seen from the phrases '*mati di tangan kami*', '*senjata kami*' and '*peluru kami*' to describe the idea of death at the hands of human beings. Usman then relates the deaths to the weapons provided to kill others. This can be seen from the words '*untuk membunuh orang lain*'. Therefore, from the words used here, Usman wants to put forward the idea that the cruelty of human beings cause others of their own kind to become victims. Thus, this shows Usman's concept of death as cruelty of human beings.

The powerful image of policemen, as powerless individuals, fighting a faceless enemy and killing without understanding why they are doing it is seen in the narrator's comments: "we are merely machines which operate only when the starter is pressed. We ourselves do not know who the people are that we have to fight, that we have to shoot or who will shoot us...We all of a sudden become each other's enemies and later kill one another, attempt to defeat the other".⁵¹ Thus, the words '*saling membunuh*' (kill each other) and '*saling menewaskan*' (defeat each other) describe Usman's notion of death as cruelty of human beings to each other.

The story also tells about Wak Berahim who has only six months to serve in the police force for he is due for retirement. Yet he is still ordered to go into the jungle to ambush the communist terrorists. His death ends his dream of retiring to his own village to plant paddy and enjoy life with his family. This conveyed the sense of unfulfilled dreams of a much deserved rest after life-long faithful service in a dangerous career.

When describing the death of Dol and Wak Berahim, Usman uses strong images. Imagery is used, more narrowly to signify descriptions of visible objects and scenes, especially if the description is vivid and particular.⁵² For instance for the death of Dol, Usman uses '*Dol tertiarap dengan tangan kanannya menangkap rusok kirinya*' (Dol collapses face-down with his right hand holding his left side). With this imagery, the writer shows the extreme suffering Dol experiences before he dies. He is shot on the left breast and he tries to stop the bleeding by covering it with his right hand. To describe Wak Berahim at the point of death, Usman uses the imagery: '*Wak Berahim terlentang. Senapangnya ikut terbaring di sebelahnya*' (Wak Berahim was lying flat on his back. His rifle was lying by his side).

Only when describing the death of Corporal Limat, does Usman use the direct phrase '*Corporal Limat mati*' (Corporal Limat is dead). This is uttered by Sergeant Rais immediately after the firing is over. The question is why does Usman give so little information about Corporal Limat compared with Dol and Wak Ibrahim? Secondly, why does he use the word '*mati*' while this word is not used to describe the death of Dol and

Wak Berahim? There might be several reasons. First of all, Dol might not be Usman's good friend so that he mentions his death in a matter of fact way. Secondly, this word is used in a conversation by Sergeant Rais who is at that time nervous and tired. Therefore, it is appropriate for Sergeant Rais to use the word '*mati*' (dead) rather than using an euphemism.

The short story "*Kenangan Jauh*" (Nostalgia)⁵³ published in 1962, portrays the distress of a wife after her husband is accidentally shot dead. The narrative begins with Dayang sitting beside a pond looking at the fish. Then she thinks about her shattered life without her loving husband. She looks back at her honeymoon with her husband, when they promised to live together forever. Later another flashback occurs and this time she sees the day her husband is killed. A week after their marriage, her husband goes into the jungle to collect bamboos. It is drizzling and suddenly a shot is fired and he is killed. When Dayang hears about her husband's death, she faints. The sound of a mango fruit falling into the pond awakens Dayang from her reverie.

The story is also about the effects of violent conflict. Many innocent people become victims because they happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Dayang's husband is one such example. He had gone into the jungle to find some bamboos when he was accidentally shot by a soldier who thought he was a communist. Thus Dayang's mother laments, "Why was my son shot, he did nothing wrong, [he was] without a weapon, without a spear, why would he want to rebel?"⁵⁴

There is a description of Dayang's husband's death. During drizzling rain, "he hears gun shots and is later killed by a bullet. He bends over with both hands clutching his stomach".⁵⁵ When Dayang's husband is shot, Usman uses the phrase '*kenalalah tubuh yang malang*' ([the bullet] hit the unfortunate body) to describe that an innocent person has been shot dead. Besides, Usman gives the reader a detailed description of the incident. However, no mention is made that Dayang's husband has been killed. Only later is the reader told that his '*mayat dilihat terhantar*' (body/corpse is found abandoned). The term '*terhantar*' suggests neglect, and abandonment and is probably used by Usman to show the injustice of it all. An innocent man is killed and his body is discovered sprawled on the ground unattended.

In this story, there are several euphemisms and phrases used by Usman when describing death such as '*dibunuh mati*' (killed dead), '*terkorban*' (killed, sacrificed), '*nyawa yang hilang*' (a life is lost) and '*korban malang*' (unfortunate victim). From the words '*dibunuh mati*' (literally, to kill to death) it gives an idea that the victim will be killed until he dies. This shows the cruelty of human beings. When followed by the words '*korban malang*' it evokes the image that even though they are innocent, they

become victims. These euphemisms and phrases used by Usman in the story describe Usman's concept of death as the cruelty of human beings where people are easily being killed by others without any reason. As a result an unfortunate person becomes a victim. When Dayang's mother grapples with the question of why her son-in-law should have been shot dead one person interjected: "It is true, this is what normally happens, it is not a guilty person who is killed, an innocent person has been killed".⁵⁶ In Dayang's monologue she expresses her hatred of the fighting in her country because "so many thousand lives are lost and so many become unfortunate victims".⁵⁷ This is significant for here Usman expresses for the first time, through Dayang, his abhorrence of violence.

It may also be noted that Usman's stories about the Emergency do not show any feelings of hatred for the communist guerillas despite the fact that he was himself a policeman and was witness to the brutality inflicted by both sides on their foes. Neither do they involve scenes of communist guerillas killing policemen. On the contrary, the deaths he describes have mostly been due to human error. This can be seen when policemen kill other policemen by mistake and a person who does not have a role in the conflict is accidentally killed. Why this is so is probably due to Usman's ideological position. The anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist thrust of the communist uprising in Malaya would not have run counter to his political convictions. Indeed, his writings have shown him not to be averse to spreading anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist propaganda.

In sum, in the above stories Usman uses several words to describe his concept of death such as: '*mempertaruhkan jiwa*', '*memperjudikan nyawa*', '*mati*', '*membunuh*', '*mati di tangan kami*', '*membunuh orang lain*', '*korban malang*', '*dibunuh mati*', '*nyawa yang hilang*' and '*terkorban*'.

In the first short story "*Kami yang Terlibat*" there is the battle between two squads of police due to a terrible mistake. The victims, their own people, are three policemen killed and two others injured. In the story Wak Berahim, who is looking forward to spending his twilight years in retirement in his own village surrounded by his family, is robbed of his dreams. Wak Berahim in "*Kami yang Terlibat*" is close to retirement but is still sent out to ambush the communists. To Usman this is unfair. In the short story "*Kenangan Jauh*" a mistake is made when a soldier shoots a villager accidentally, but the mistake is compounded by the sad fact that the victim is unarmed. Moreover, the victim had just been married for a week and had he been alive he could have looked forward to a long life of married bliss with the woman he loved. Dayang had fainted on hearing the news that her husband had died and she is immediately plunged into a deep depression. The main point Usman wants to highlight is that when there is fighting innocent people become the victims. He develops the after-death scenes further when he gives more emphasis to the sadness and despair faced by Dayang, stressing her pain and sadness.

Usman wants to emphasize that death means the loss of loved ones. Thus, in the short stories about deaths which are related to violent conflict, Usman draws as much attention to the victims who die as to the individuals who become victims as a result of a death.

v. **Animals as Victims of Human Sport**

In the last stages of his writing career when Usman sometimes ventured away from matters pertaining to his own society and looked at humanity as a whole, he wrote a short story about animals who become victims of human cruelty. "*Rimbaku, Air Mataku*" (My Jungle, My Tears)⁵⁸ published in November 1980 is a story about a family of deer. The narrative begins with the father deer going out at night to find some food. Without his knowledge, his fawn follows him. Later, he finds his father near some small bushes eating some young shoots. Suddenly he hears shots. The fawn sees his father collapse and hears him calling for help. But his voice grows fainter and fainter and finally the fawn hears it no more. A few minutes later he sees two men coming down from a big tree, holding guns. He knows that they are responsible for killing his father. The fawn then runs home taking the sad news to his mother.

The next morning, the doe and her two fawns go in search of the father's body. On the way, they hear the noise of machines and vehicles. Eventually, they reach the place where the father was killed. They see blood on the leaves. The doe and the younger fawn cry. Then, they follow the path of the blood drops along the ground. Suddenly they hear the noise of machines and trees falling. They continue their journey until they reach a small river. The river water has been polluted with oil. As the younger fawn is very thirsty, he quickly drinks the water. After that they keep walking and reach the top of a hill. They see people cutting trees with chainsaws. Then the mother decides to return home.

On the way home, the younger fawn has a stomach ache. They walk slowly. When they reach another small river, they find that many fish have been killed. The river is polluted too. They continue their journey and along the way, they see many animals running and searching for new places to live. At night the deer family could not sleep well. The mother is grieving while the younger fawn is getting sicker. The next morning they find the sick fawn dead. Not far from their home, they hear the sound of trees falling, a noise that brings them ever closer to destruction and death.⁵⁹

In this story, Usman wants to portray how a human sport makes victims of helpless animals. Thus the pursuit of pleasure by humans causes pain to animals. Usman likens man to a tiger for both like to kill and eat deer: '*antara harimau dan manusia tidak*

ada bezanya, kedua-duanya sama membunuh dan memakan kami' (between the tiger and a human being there is no difference, both kill and eat us). Here, Usman uses the words '*sama membunuh*' to give an idea that between tigers and human beings there is no difference for they like to kill each other and others as well. This gives a notion of cruelty where human beings who are killing animals are similar to animals in their predatory habits.

Usman's story is also environmentally conscious. He describes deforestation on a large scale with the noisy machines and the chainsaws as well as the animals running away from their original habitat which had been destroyed as evidence of this. He portrays the consequences of polluted water, dead fish floating in the rivers and a fawn dying after drinking the water.

When describing the death of the father deer, Usman expresses this in a dramatic way. Immediately after he is shot, he collapses and his body writhes in pain while his limbs stiffen. Usman wants the reader to feel sympathy for the father deer. And this dramatic scene continues with the voice of the father deer calling out for help getting fainter and fainter. Even though father deer is an animal, the word '*mati*' is not used to describe his death. Instead he uses a 'poetical' metaphor to describe how his cry for help grows fainter, the sound fading away until it disappears: '*kian lama kian perlahan*'. Usman wants the readers to imagine exactly what happens to the dying deer. Furthermore, by using this expression, the reader can feel the pain felt by the father deer. Usman wants to emphasize the similarity between the deer and human beings. In other words, animals also feel love, pain, despair and fear.

Usman creates another dramatic scene when the narrator describes the death of the younger fawn. The mother goes to lick her baby. Suddenly she stops licking. The other fawn senses that there is something wrong. He goes to his brother who is already quiet and stiff. His mouth is full of foam and his legs and thighs are covered with faeces.⁶⁰ Usman uses "poetical" metaphor to describe the death of the younger deer with the expression '*adik bongsu yang sepi dan kaku*' (the younger brother who is already quiet and stiff). There is no need to actually use the word '*mati*'.

Another 'poetical' metaphor used by Usman can be seen when the narrator describes the dead fish as '*tersadai sepi tidak berketik*' (quietly lying with no movement). Only when mentioning the death of the fish in the river, does Usman use the word '*mati*' as in '*semuanya sudah mati*' (they are all already dead). Usman uses several phrases to describe the death of the fish such as '*mati dari suatu kehidupan damai bahagia*' (To die and be taken away from a peaceful and happy life) and '*mati di tempat kehidupannya yang segar dan gembira*' (To die in his own fresh and happy environment). Usman seems

to say that the fish should be allowed to live happily and peacefully in its own environment and shows a sense of rage that irresponsible persons have polluted the water. Thus, from the words '*tersadai sepi*' and '*mati*', the idea is conveyed that they die in a once peaceful environment because of the encroachment and cruelty of human beings. Thus, from the words used by Usman such as '*sama membunuh*', '*semuanya sudah mati*', '*tersadai sepi*', '*mati dari suatu kehidupan damai bahagia*' and '*mati di tempat kehidupannya yang segar dan gembira*' Usman's concept of death as cruelty of human beings is emphasised.

While expressing the idea that animals are entitled to happiness and should have the right to live undisturbed in their own environment, Usman at the same time reminds the human species that they should have more noble attributes through the words of one deer who talks to another: "you should be thankful to be born with a soul and noble features, and not have the instinct to kill like the tiger, lion, crocodile and also human beings".⁶¹ Thus, he gives the deer the soul and the noble attributes and places man in the same category as feral animals. In other words, Usman regards people who kill animals are cruel.

The cruelty of human beings again can be seen in the final statement of the narrative:

The sound of trees being felled was faintly heard. A noise which makes the jungle, our home, become smaller and our life more difficult. A noise that kills the happy voices in the jungle, that extinguishes the yell of gibbons and the singing of birds. A noise that brings us ever closer to destruction and death.⁶²

Here, Usman uses words such as '*ditumbangkan*', '*semakin kecil*', '*semakin terdesak*', '*membunuh*', '*memadamkan*', '*menelan*', '*kemusnahan*' and '*kematian*' to describe the his idea of death as cruelty of human beings.

From this story, Usman uses indirect words to criticize the irresponsibility of human beings such as: '*antara harimau dan manusia tidak ada bezanya, kedua-duanya sama membunuh dan memakan kami*' and '*kau harus berterima kasih kerana kau dilahirkan dengan jiwa dan sifat mulia, tidak mempunyai naluri pembunuh*'.

Conclusion

There are several words used by Usman in conjunction with '*korban*' to describe his concept of death. For instance in "*Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua*" (1950) he uses the words '*korban fitnah*'. In "*Haslina, Perawan Kesayangan Kampung Kami*" (1955), he uses

'korban keganasan', whereas in *"Kenangan Jauh"* (1962) he uses the words 'korban malang'. In terms of using the word to describe death, Usman uses a variety of words, phrases, imagery, euphemisms and metaphors. However, he prefers to use "poetical" metaphors such as *'melayanglah roh meninggalkan jasad'* (the soul flew and left the body), *'menghembuskan nafasnya yang akhir'* (breathed out for the last time), *'sekujur tubuhnya menjadi kaku'* (her prostate body stiffens), *'nafasnya berhenti'* (she stops breathing), *'darahnya berhenti'* (her blood stops flowing), *'nyawa tercabut'* (lost life), *'terbujur terahap'* (lying covered in a shroud), *'kian lama kian perlahan'* (softer and softer) and *'sepi dan kaku'* (quietened and stiffened). Apart from that an orientational metaphor is used by Usman to describe the death of Dara in *"Uda dan Dara"*: *'Dara pun menutupkan matanya, pejam untuk selama-lamanya'* (Dara closed her eyes, closed forever). Usman uses euphemisms in the story *"Haslina, Perawan Kesayangan Kampung Kami"* such as *'tidak ada lagi di dunia ini'* (no more in this world), *'menamatkan hidupnya'* (to end her life) and *'Haslina meninggal'* (Haslina left).

Usman uses these metaphors so that the reader understands and can experience one kind of thing in terms of another. Instead of 'mati', Usman uses *'melayanglah roh'* (the soul flies off) meaning one who no longer has a soul in his or her body. Therefore he or she is dying. Another example is *'nyawa tercabut'* which means that life has been wrenched off. This person is also dying. Therefore the image of death is presented in the conceptual metaphors such as *'melayanglah roh meninggalkan jasad'*, *'kepada saat akhir hayatnya'*, *'tidak ada lagi di dunia ini'*, *'menamatkan hidupnya'*, *'putuslah nafas'*, *'menutupkan matanya, pejam untuk selama-lamanya'*, *'nyawa tercabut'*, *'nafasnya berhenti'*, *'darahnya berhenti'*, *'terbujur terahap'*, *'kian lama kian perlahan'* and *'sepi dan kaku'*. Furthermore, Usman's metaphors are not just a matter of language, that is, of mere words but metaphors as linguistic expressions which are possible precisely because there are metaphors in the Malay or Islamic conceptual system.⁶³ In other words, to Usman, 'death' is a 'concrete' state that is when someone has no movement or when someone is being somewhere else. It is therefore made very real to the reader.

There are several phrases in which the word 'mati' is used. For example in *"Kami Yang Terlibat"* it is used in the phrases *'mereka mati di tangan kami sendiri'* (They die by our own hands), *'kalau aku mati'* (if I die) and *'Kopral Limat mati'* (Corporal Limat dies). In *"Matinya Seorang Perempuan"* the phrases in which the word 'mati' is found are *'Dia dijumpai mati'* (She is found dead), *'Dia mati lemas'* (She died through drowning), *'Minah mati dibunuh'* (Minah dies because she is murdered) and *'mati di kolam'* (dies in the pond). In *"Bila Dara Sudah Pergi"*, 'mati' is used in *'di situ juga dia mati'* (she dies on the spot) and *'terus mati'* (immediately dies), while in *"Kenangan Jauh"* the word appears in the phrase *'tak bersalah dibunuh mati'* (an innocent person has been killed). Finally, in the short story *"Rimbaku, Air Mataku"*, the phrase used is *'semuanya sudah'*

mati' (all of them are already dead). Usman is not using metaphors to replace the word '*mati*'. The reason for using the word '*mati*' is that as an impolite word it shocks and grates on the senses. This of course is the desired effect that Usman wants in his readers to bring home to them that 'death' is a cruel tragedy.

From the above words, phrases, imagery, euphemisms and metaphors used by Usman in the short stories, we can derive Usman's concept of death as the cruelty of the rich; death as cruelty of the royal family; death as cruelty of the respected man; death as cruelty of the parents; death as cruelty of human beings; death as the injustice in society; death as the end of suffering and death as the symbol of true love.

From these short stories which have been analysed in terms of their description of 'death', there are several points which can be made. First of all, the word 'death' either directly or indirectly mentioned by Usman, carries a negative value. A word's value is "the value a word gets from our attitude toward what it stands for. Such value can be positive or negative, and it can be so much a part of a word's meaning that whenever we use the word we practically see a plus or minus sign over it: the sign of our approval or longing or some other positive attitude, or else of some negative attitude like our disapproval or maybe our fear".⁶⁴ These negative values used by Usman cause the reader to feel sad and moved as well as to be critical of the circumstances or/and the agent(s) who caused the death.

Apart from that, 'death' could be considered as an expression of Usman's ideology. This is true because most of the short stories portray the death of the victims because of the cruelty and irresponsibility of the rich people. The rich are human but on the other hand they are cruel and inhumane.

In several short stories Usman portrays the victims suffering a violent death. For instance in "*Matinya Seorang Perempuan*" Minah is killed by Che Leman in a pond; in "*Bila Dara Sudah Pergi*" Dara dies after being hit by a car; in "*Kami Yang Terlibat*" the victims are Dol, Wak Berahim and Corporal Limat because of the terrible mistake; while in "*Kenangan Jauh*" the victim is Dayang's husband who is shot dead by a soldier and in "*Rimbaku, Airmataku*" the father deer, fawn and the fish are killed by the actions of human beings.

Usman uses several approaches to criticize the irresponsible and inhumane person or persons for causing the death of the victim. For instance in "*Haslina, Perawan Kesayangan Kampung Kami*" (1955) he criticizes the royal family as '*golongan feudal yang terlalu hina jiwanya dan peribadinya*' and '*keturunan yang sebenarnya sangat biadab dan rendah jiwanya*'. Meanwhile in the revised version of the story "*Haslina*"

(1963) he criticizes with sarcasm: '*korban keganasan nafsu anak-anak bangsawan yang terhormat dan termulia sekali dalam dunia ini*'. In "*Rimbaku, Air Matak*", we can see Usman using sharp sarcasm: '*antara harimau dan manusia tidak ada bezanya, keduanya sama membunuh dan memakan kami*' to convey the idea that a person who kills animals is himself a wild animal.

From the above analysis it seems clear that Usman approaches death less as a philosophical question than as a means of conveying a social message. Usman uses the death theme to emphasize his ideological stand. Thus death becomes the ultimate price that someone pays because of man's cruelty, irresponsibility, greed, and negligence. The victims are seen as martyrs sacrificed on the alter of man's injustice. This is the dramatic effect that Usman tries to get from his stories. The underlying inspiration is the social message he tries to put across, that is, so many deaths can be avoided if people are kind, helpful, compassionate, considerate, unprejudiced, not snobbish, responsible and humane.

Endnotes

¹ Ronald Schleifer, *Rhetoric and Death: The Language of Modernism and Postmodern Discourse Theory*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990, pp. 5 - 6.

² *Kamus Dewan Edisi Baru*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1989, pp. 809 - 810 states '*mati*' means '*tidak bernyawa, tidak hidup lagi, tidak pernah hidup, tidak bergerak atau berjalan lagi (mesin dll), tidak bergiat atau aktif lagi (pergerakan, pertubuhan)*'. The word '*kematian*' means '*perihal mati; menderita (menanggung) kerana seseorang atau sesuatu sudah mati*'.

³ J. Milton Cowan (ed.), *Hans Wehr: A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1966, p. 930.

⁴ *Kamus Dewan Edisi Baru*, 1989, p. 811.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 755.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 655 states '*korban*' means '*binatang yang disembelih pada hari-hari tertentu dalam bulan Zulhijah dan sebahagian daripada dagingnya disedekahkan (diberikan) kepada fakir dan miskin; istiadat mempersembahkan roti suci dan air anggur (dalam agama Roman Katholik); persembahan kepada dewa-dewa; pemberian sebagai tanda kebaktian; orang yang menanggung penderitaan akibat sesuatu (perbuatan), mangsa; kematian kerana nahas*'. The word '*berkorban*' means '*menawarkan sesuatu sebagai korban; menanggung penderitaan untuk keselamatan orang, menuerahkan sesuatu untuk tanda bakti*'. The word '*terkorban*' means '*terbunuh, termusnah*'. While the word '*pengorbanan*' means '*perihal mengorbankan*'.

⁷ R.O. Winstedt, *An Unabridged Malay-English Dictionary*, Kuala Lumpur: Marican and Sons (Malaysia) Ltd., 1965, p. 57.

⁸ *Kamus Dewan Edisi Baru*, 1989, p. 176 stated '*bunuh diri*' means '*sengaja mematikan diri sendiri*'. '*Membunuh*' means '*mematikan, menghilangkan nyawa; memadamkan (api, tulisan), menghapuskan, melupakan; menutup (menampalkan) tempat yang bocor*'. '*Terbunuh*' means '*mati (akibat kemalangan, dibunuh)*'. '*Pembunuhan*' means '*perbuatan membunuh*'. *Pembunuh* means orang yang membunuh, alat atau sesuatu yang digunakan untuk membunuh'.

⁹ J. Milton Cowan (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 6.

¹⁰ *Kamus Dewan Edisi Baru*, 1989, p. 16 stated '*ajal*' means '*batas hidup yang telah ditentukan oleh Tuhan, saat atau ketika mati*'.

¹¹ *Kamus Dewan Edisi Baru*, 1989, p. 798 stated '*mangkat*' (bahasa dalam) means '*meninggal (digunakan untuk raja-raja), mati*'.

- 12 *Kamus Dewan Edisi Baru*, 1989, p. 1369 stated 'meninggal dunia' (bahasa percakapan) means 'kembali ke rahmatullah, mati'.
- 13 *Kamus Dewan Edisi Baru*, 1989, p. 795 stated 'mampus' (bahasa kasar) means 'mati'.
- 14 Usman Awang, "Pengalaman Saya Menulis Sajak" in Dinsman and Sutung Umar Rs (eds.), *Sikap dan Pemikiran Usman Awang*, Petaling Jaya: Penerbit Fajar Bakti, 1983, p. 102 stated: 'Saya telah lama ditinggal oleh ibu saya. Beliau telah meninggalkan saya sejak saya kecil lagi. Saya jadi yatim sejak berumur lima tahun. Telah saya rasakan sendiri betapa rindunya saya kepada ibu saya, betapa inginnya saya melihat wajah ibu saya, betapa rindunya saya kepada kasih sayangnya, kasih sayang seorang ibu sejati, betapa saya merindukan belai dan usapnya.'
- 15 Usman Awang, "Pengalaman Saya dalam Tahun-tahun 50-an" in Dinsman and Sutung Umar Rs (eds.), *ibid.*, p. 72 stated: "We saw people being caught and killed frequently. We also saw corpses hit like hunting animals, we saw farmers' houses burned and the people either being arrested or being transferred to resettlement areas, and we saw their homes and villages being fenced in, we saw our friends in the police force injured and killed, we saw their children, wives, mothers and fathers crying. All of this touched my heart deeply".
- 16 *Utusan Zaman*, 7 May 1950.
- 17 "Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua", 'Oleh tidak tahan lagi dipeluk penderitaan yang hebat.'
- 18 "Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua", 'menurut fikirannya biarlah dia mati di pondok usang ini, biarlah dia terbujur di situ sehingga Osman anaknya pulang.'
- 19 "Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua", 'melayanglah roh meninggalkan jasad yang sekian lama menderita...'
- 20 "Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua", 'Rohani menangis benar-benar memeluk sebujur tubuh yang tak bernyawa itu.'
- 21 *Mastika*, December 1954, pp. 44 - 47 and 50.
- 22 "Ayah tak Kembali", p. 44, 'Malaikatulmaut boleh dengan senang hati mengambil nyawanya.'
- 23 *Mastika*, May 1955, pp. 46 - 50.
- 24 "Haslina, Perawan Kesayangan Kampung Kami", p. 49.
- 25 Published in Usman Awang, *Degup Jantung*, Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Melayu Baru, 1966, pp. 83-90.
- 26 "Haslina", p. 90.
- 27 Chandra Muzaffar, *Protector?: An Analysis of the Concept and Practice of Loyalty in Leader-led Relationships within Malay Society*, Pulau Pinang: An Aliran Publication, p. 72.
- 28 "Haslina, Perawan Kesayangan Kampung Kami", p. 49, 'dia ingin membalas dendam. Dia ingin membalaskan dendam, bencinya dan segala rasa hatinya kepada seluruh lelaki'.
- 29 *Al-Quran* : IV : 29.
- 30 Mat Saad Abd. Rahman, *Undang-undang Jenayah Islam (Jenayah Qisas)*, Petaling Jaya: Al-Rahmaniah, 1989, p. 302.
- 31 *Dewan Bahasa*, Jilid 3 Bilangan 6, June 1959, pp. 317 - 325.
- 32 "Matinya Seorang Perempuan", p. 324, 'Ayah sendiri datang ke kampung pada sebelah malam dan dicarinya Minah. Ayah menjumpai Minah dekat surau. Dan esoknya orang menemui mayat Minah buntang di kolam besar'.
- 33 *Mastika*, November 1954, pp. 42 - 45.
- 34 'Tabiat' refers to an unusual act before a person dies. For instance, someone who is very sick and has lost his appetite will suddenly want to eat a variety of food; someone who has lost much of his memory suddenly can remember very well his experiences or something related to him, or someone who has had an enemy for a long time suddenly goes and meets his enemy. The unusual behaviour becomes applicable after the person dies when people normally say 'padanlah dia berkelakuan begitu, rupanya dia hendak mati' (no wonder he behaved in that way, he was going to die).
- 35 *Mastika*, March 1956, pp. 42 - 49.
- 36 "Uda dan Dara", p. 47, 'Kedatangan Dara terlambat sesaat. Di waktu bulan mengambang sayu, di saat suara punggok masih merayu mendayu-dayu, putuslah nafas Uda, dengan mata setengah terbuka tanda terkilan hati tak sempat dapat melihat Dara.'
- 37 George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980, pp. 14 - 15.
- 38 *Dewan Bahasa*, Jilid 6 Bilangan 7, July 1962, pp. 329 - 332.
- 39 "Harga Hidup", p. 332, 'Wang tidak pernah memberikan kebebasan kepada manusia. Sebaliknya wang mengikat kehidupan manusia, mengongkongnya dan menundukkan manusia itu'.
- 40 "Harga Hidup", p. 332, 'kesenangan dan kebahagiaan hidup ... ialah kepuasan jiwa dan kebebasan diri dari pengaruh wang'.
- 41 "Harga Hidup", p. 332, 'ia merasa kecil berhadapan dengan penggali kubur yang tadinya dianggap orang yang tak bererti'.

- 42 Mohd. Nor Ngah, "Islamic World-View of Man, Society and Nature among the Malays in Malaysia" in Mohd. Taib Osman (ed.), *Malaysian World-View*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985, p. 17.
- 43 *Cerita-Cerita Pendek DBP*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1958, pp. 23-35.
- 44 "Kami yang Terlibat", pp. 34 - 35, 'Mereka mati di tangan kami sendiri, oleh senjata kami, oleh peluru kami yang diberikan kepada kami untuk membunuh orang lain - orang-orang yang tidak kami kenali.'
- 45 Virginia Matheson, "Usman Awang, Keris Mas and Hamzah: Individual Expressions of Social Commitment in Malay Literature", *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs (RIMA)*, Volume 21 (1), 1987, p. 111.
- 46 "Kami yang Terlibat", p. 30, 'kawan-kawan kami yang sekarang mempertaruhkan jiwa, memperjudikan nyawanya yang hanya satu itu untuk kehidupan seluruh keluarganya, untuk keluarganya. Tidak ada yang lain lagi. Dan apabila mereka mati, maka kematian itu semata-mata untuk isteri dan untuk anak-anaknya.'
- 47 "Kami yang Terlibat", p. 35, 'Dan kami yang terlibat ini? Beracah-acah dengan maut ... hanya untuk sesuap nasi.'
- 48 "Kami Yang Terlibat", p. 30, 'Kalau aku mati, anak-anakku jadi yatim. Biniku jadi janda. Mereka harus menanggung beban hidup yang berat ini. Biniku akan memikul bebannya yang berat dan besar. Ia mencari nafkah hidupnya, nafkah anak-anaknya.'
- 49 "Kami yang Terlibat", p. 35, 'Maka semua orang menyatakan sedihnya, orang-orang besar di negeri kami akan menyampaikan pernyataan dukacitanya yang penuh dan banyak. Hanya itu sahaja.'
- 50 "Kami yang Terlibat", pp. 34-35, 'Mereka mati di tangan kami sendiri, oleh senjata kami, oleh peluru kami yang diberikan kepada kami untuk membunuh orang lain - orang-orang yang tidak kami kenali.'
- 51 "Kami yang Terlibat", p. 31, 'kami hanyalah jentera-jentera yang akan berjalan hanya apabila ditekan pesawat-pesawatnya sahaja. Kami sendiri tidak tahu siapakah orang-orang yang akan kami tentang, yang akan kami tembak atau yang akan menembak kami nanti...Kami dengan tiba-tiba sahaja bermusuhan dengan mereka dan kemudian saling membunuh, saling menewaskan!'
- 52 M.H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1993, p. 87.
- 53 Asraf (ed.), *Mekar dan Segar*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1962, pp. 154-157.
- 54 "Kenangan Jauh", p. 157, 'Mengapa pula anakku yang ditembak, tak ada salah tampak, tak bersenjata tak bertombak, kalau akan memberontak?'
- 55 "Kenangan Jauh", p. 156, 'terdengarlah bunyi yang ramai, benda bulat datang bertubi, kenalah tubuh yang malang, lalu ia pun membongkok dengan dua tangan menangkap perut.'
- 56 "Kenangan Jauh", p. 157, 'Benar begini selalu terjadi, tak bersalah dibunuh mati, tak berdosa terkorban saja.'
- 57 "Kenangan Jauh", p. 157, 'entah berapa ribu nyawa yang hilang, sudah berapa banyak pula korban malang.'
- 58 *Dewan Sastera*, Jilid 10 Bilangan 11, November 1980, pp. 32 - 35.
- 59 "Rimbaku, Air Mataku", p. 35, 'Bunyi yang mendekatkan kami kepada kemusnahan dan kematian'.
- 60 "Rimbaku, Air Mataku", p. 35, 'Kulihat ibu mendekati adik bongso dan menjilat-jilat tubuh anak kesayangannya. Tiba-tiba ibu berhenti dari menjilat adik bongso. Kemudian ibu terdiam. Aku segera memahami keadaan. Kudekali adik bongso yang sepi dan kaku. Mulutnya penuh buih dan kaki dan pahanya penuh kotoran najis.'
- 61 "Rimbaku, Air Mataku", p. 34, 'kau harus berterima kasih kerana kau dilahirkan dengan jiwa dan sifat mulia, tidak mempunyai naluri pembunuh sebagaimana yang ada pada harimau, singa, buaya dan juga manusia'.
- 62 "Rimbaku, Air Mataku", p. 35, 'Sayup-sayup terdengar bunyi pohon-pohon ditumbangkan. Bunyi yang menyebabkan rimba kediaman kami semakin kecil dan hidup kami semakin terdesak. Bunyi yang membunuh suara riang-riang rimba, yang memadamkan teriakan ungka dan menelan nyanyi burung. Bunyi yang mendekatkan kami kepada kemusnahan dan kematian'.
- 63 George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 6
- 64 Peggy Rosenthal, *Words and Value: Some Leading Words and Where They Lead Us*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1984, p.5.

CONCLUSION

In the thesis, it is argued that from the analysis of the keywords in his short stories we can conclude that in Usman's opinion, Malay society is in urgent need of change. However, it faces many problems and obstacles that obstruct any effort to engender that change. His stories describe Malays who are poor and uneducated and burdened by an outmoded value system, which had perpetuated social stratification, but which had not produced good leaders at the top of the hierarchy to give them the leadership and the confidence to move forward. These internal problems were compounded by pressures from outside which were equally debilitating. Thus, through keywords in his short stories, Usman raises a variety of social issues which, to his mind, were relevant to and essential for a better understanding of the dilemmas and challenges faced by his society. Of these, five in particular, dominated his attention, namely, the question of '*bangsa*', poverty, justice, leadership and death.

There are 13 short stories which depict the concept of '*bangsa*'; 10 short stories which touch on the concept of poverty; 11 short stories which reflect the concept of justice; 14 short stories which discuss the concept of leadership and 9 short stories which depict the concept of death. Here, we can see that Usman dwelled most on the idea of leadership in his short stories. This is because he believes that leaders are the main agent for the development of a backward Malay society.

In his discussion of the concept of '*bangsa*', Usman associates Malay backwardness with words such as '*merendahkan*' (look down), '*berjiwa hamba*' (slave's soul), '*kekecewaan*' (disappointed), '*kutu embun*' (dew bug which denotes a loafer), '*kacang hantu*' (ghost bean which denotes a lay-about), '*faham kolot*' (narrow view and mind), '*tidak tahu bekerja*' (do not know how to work which denotes laziness), '*kelemahan*' (weakness) and '*kesempitan*' (tightness). On the other hand, he perceives progress for his '*bangsa*' in terms of the words such as '*kemajuan*' (development), '*berkhidmat*' (giving service), '*menegakkan*' (to raise), '*berbakti*' (to serve) and '*kemerdekaan*' (independence).

In his notion of poverty, Usman emphasises economic deprivation through a number of words of which '*miskin*' (poor), '*miskin lara*' (poor and distressed), '*melarat*' (destitute), '*susah benar*' (very difficult), '*serba kurang*' (insufficiency), '*kesempitan hidup*' (tightness of life) were the most prominent; emotional pressures through words such as '*kepahitan hidup*' (bitterness of life), '*kesusahan*' (difficulty), '*kesengsaraan*' (suffering) and '*penderitaan*' (distress); and class divisions in the words '*merayap-rayap*' (creeps around), '*jijik*' (revolting), '*sampah*' (rubbish), '*desa*' (village), '*tani*' (farmer),

'*atap rumbia*' (roof made of sago palm), '*mencangkul*' (to hoe), '*pondok*' (hut) and '*tidak bernasib baik*' (unlucky) to show poverty while wealth was depicted in the words such as '*emas*' (gold), '*sawah*' (paddy field) and '*pondok*'.

Usman's concept of justice evokes the notion of a just society under a '*demokrasi tulin*' (true democracy), '*sama rata sama rasa*' (same level, same taste), where people '*duduk sama rendah, berdiri sama tinggi*' (sit and stand at the same height), and where decisions are made based on '*tak pilih kasih, tak pilih sahabat atau saudara*' (no discrimination between a lover, friend or relative). Further, people know what is '*salah dan benar*' (right and wrong) and put their faith in '*timbangan*' (judgement), '*hakim*' (magistrate), '*pengadil*' (umpire) and '*mahkamah*' (court). But it was an ideal that was far from the reality which Usman portrays by using the words '*tidak adil*' (unjust), '*tidak mempunyai keadilan*' (no justice), '*hanya menyenangkan*' (only beneficial), '*hanya mementingkan*' (only pay attention), '*tidak berubah*' (no changes) and '*kuku besi*' (iron-fisted). Thus, he advocated steps to be taken '*untuk keadilan*' (for justice), or in order to '*menuntut keadilan*' (demand for justice), '*tidak lebih maka tidak juga kurang*' (no more and no less).

When Usman touches on the question of leadership, he provides very little evidence of the presence of good leaders in all sectors, be it religious, at the level of the village, in the professions or in politics. In fact, his short stories, more often than not, describe poor leadership in the country, seeing most leaders as irresponsible, indifferent, self-interested, dishonest, untruthful and immoral. There are several words used by Usman to indicate the characteristics of bad leadership such as '*mata duitan*' (money mad), '*memilih keturunan dan harta*' (choosing descent and wealth), '*bercakap-cakap tak baik*' (talking bad), '*mengumpat*' (to slander), '*mengata-gata*' (to say unkind things) and '*memuji-muji diri*' (to praise himself).

In presenting his concept of death, Usman tends to show a causal link between death and acts of irresponsibility, inhumane behaviour and self-interestedness. He uses words such as '*korban fitnah*' (victim of slander), '*korban keganasan*' (victim of cruelty), '*korban malang*' (unfortunate victim), '*membunuh*' (killing), '*sama membunuh*' (killing each other), '*dibunuh mati*' (killed dead), '*mati dibunuh*' (murdered) and '*mati lemas*' (drowned). The needlessness of and waste through death he evokes in the words '*mempertaruhkan jiwa*' (pledging the souls) and '*memperjudikan nyawa*' (gambling with a life) while the perpetrator's behaviour is seen as '*kekejaman*' (cruelty), '*kebuasan*' (cruelty), '*sangat biadab*' (very ill-mannered) and '*terlalu hina jiwa*' (contemptible soul).

For each of Usman Awang's key concepts ('*bangsa*', poverty, justice, leadership and death), there are several keywords in the Malay language which depict and explain

each concept. All these keywords, in turn, are essential to understand Usman's conceptual world and his thinking about Malay society. Thus, the keywords approach is a useful tool in understanding not only Usman's thought processes but also society to which the writer belongs.

An analysis of the keywords, in fact, provides us with an understanding of Usman's vision for a new society, that is, one in which there is political freedom, a democratic form of government, justice for all and equality. He rejects the notion of a society where questions of social status or standing and the adherence to hierarchy play an important part. In other words, Usman rejects the negative values found in traditional Malay society, preferring instead a way of life based on ideas which have their roots in western political thought. He looks towards nurturing a more caring society, where private citizens help each other, where the more able give capable and genuine leadership and where no obstacles are placed to hinder interaction or even marriage between one human being and another. In short, Usman proposes that Malays, in particular, work towards achieving a just and more equitable society. At least in his notion of '*bangsa*' as nationality, Usman embraces non-Malays in his scheme of things.

Usman comes across as a writer with a mission, as indicated in the words he uses in his stories such as '*menyokong*' (support), '*membimbing*' (guide), '*mendidik*' (teach), '*berkhidmat*' (give service), '*perubahan*' (change), '*pembaharuan*' (changes), '*perjuangan*' (struggle), '*kebangkitan*' (arouse), '*menegakkan*' (uplift), '*mempercepatkan*' (fasten), '*memperluaskan*' (widen), '*mempertingkatkan*' (to increase), '*memperkembangkan*' (expand), '*kemajuan*' (develop), '*kemerdekaan*' (independence) and '*kedaulatan*' (sovereignty). These words are in regular and common usage in most of Usman's short stories. His stories were used as a vehicle to expose the flaws within Malayan society in general and Malay society in particular.

In his exploration of the key issues for Malay society, as he saw them, Usman developed a distinctive style of writing and a critical approach to portray the realities of Malay society. The short story genre is probably not an easy medium for expressing serious ideas of the sort he desired, while at the same time maintaining the thread of a story. Usman succeeded in both respects usually by the method of conveying his ideas through a narrator, who plays the dual role of the observer and commentator, and through the use of appropriate and effective words. In the latter case, it has enabled his works to be examined through the method of keywords analysis.

Another feature of his short stories is that in his effort to show positive values and qualities on the one hand and to expose the negative on the other, Usman adopts the approach of providing sharp contrasts. He paints his characters as either good or bad or

white or black without acknowledging that there could well be shades of grey between the two extremes. But, this method is probably adopted in order to show the unmistakable opposing and conflicting positions and the deep divisions in society. This is also designed to shock his Malay readers and awaken in them the realisation that all is not well with society and in turn encourage in them the desire for change. When he criticizes, Usman goes through a range of emotions and uses colourful and graphic words. He can be gently critical or openly condemning. At times he uses euphemisms, idioms and sarcasm both for style and effect. There is some evidence to suggest that Usman progressively becomes bolder in expressing his criticism in his short stories.

Usman's approach to criticism is a measure both of his concern for the future of Malay society and his ideological position and prejudices. He criticizes the Malays and their leaders in most of his short stories not because he dislikes them but because he loves his own '*bangsa*', and he wants them to develop and to be respected by other races. Thus, in Chapter 2, in several of his short stories, he chides Malay youths who are lazy, illiterate, do not love their own arts and culture, easily give up hope, are more interested in young love and courtship, and are not interested in being involved in the development of their own '*bangsa*' by joining national associations such as ASAS 50. Usman also criticizes the older generation who are still outdated in their thinking.

Instead of blaming others for the cause of Malay backwardness, Usman in the first instance blames the Malays themselves for their weaknesses. He sees these as 'problems' that have to be overcome. Negative attitudes and thinking have to be changed in order for the Malays to modernise and progress. Thus, he uses several approaches in criticizing them. For instance he uses idioms such as '*kacang hantu*' (ghost bean which denotes a lay-about) and '*kutu embun*' (dew bug which denotes a loafer). He also uses direct criticism such as accusing the older generation of adhering to '*faham kolot*' (outdated view) and of possessing '*kesempitan pandangan dan fikiran*' (narrow view and mind).

In Chapter 3, which discusses the concept of poverty, he merely remarks that some of the actions in society are deplorable in the use of the phrase: '*Sedih, hebat, dahsyat, perlakuan-perlakuan di dalam masyarakat kita*' (Sad, awesome, terrible, the actions in our society). On the other hand, Usman directly criticizes the rich by describing them as arrogant (*berhidung tinggi*) and as blood suckers (*lintah darat*) and he likens a person who is uncaring towards the poor as a man without a soul (*manusia tidak berjiwa*). These are harsh words which seem to indicate Usman's alienation from the well-to-do and his desire to be the champion of the Malay poor.

To Usman, the rich, the leaders, and others who have failed in their responsibility to help the poor have created circumstances which result in the poor becoming poorer and

the rich becoming richer. It is therefore no accident that he also looks at the issue of social justice in his short stories. From these stories one gets the impression that Usman sees social injustice as endemic in society. Thus, as we can see from several of his short stories, he points an accusing finger at the rich, the Government and the private sector, among others, as those practising social injustice. Usman expresses his dissatisfaction with society by using several words such as '*ketidakadilan*' or '*tidak adil*'. Usman also uses idioms such as '*kuku besi*' (iron-fisted) and '*kepala batu*' (stubborn) and poses questions such as: '*beginikah keadilan?*'

Whether Usman is addressing the issue of '*bangsa*', poverty or justice, an important assumption, sometimes unspoken, that runs through them all is his conviction that Malay society is lacking in effective leadership. However, probably due to his belief that leading by example is essential, in several instances in his short stories, Usman compares and contrasts good and bad leadership. To Usman, a good leader is one who is responsible, honest, has good morals, can influence and guide others, is committed to helping people and is not selfish. Usman appears to believe that traditional leaders are no longer relevant in Malay society. Thus, autocratic behaviour which is characteristic of traditional leadership is also rejected by him. Usman also condemns some modern-type leaders who claim to be leaders but neglect their responsibility as '*kononnya mengaku sebagai pemimpin*' (presume to have been declared as leaders). His idea of an ideal '*pemimpin*', is one who will lead a protest for social justice, struggle for the sake of other people, has a sense of responsibility, a capability to deliver speeches, can influence others, has good morals, is a mediator, can lead effectively and gives good guidance and is decisive.

To Usman, the change needed in society is meant to rid it of irresponsible, inhumane and self-interested people who can cause others to suffer and even die. Usman seems to regard the Malay upper classes and the rich as those with particularly despicable behaviour. In "*Bila Dara Sudah Pergi*" (1954) he directly criticises the rich car driver who hit and killed Dara as a person '*yang hanya semata-mata membangga kebesarannya*' (only proud of his status). Usman is even more harsh when he criticizes royalty as seen in "*Haslina, Perawan Kesayangan Kampung Kami*" (1955) where he sneers at the upper classes and insults their character: '*golongan bangsawan ... golongan feudal ... yang terlalu hina jiwanya dan peribadinya*' (noble group ... feudal group ... with contemptible soul and character). In "*Matinya Seorang Perempuan*" (1959) he also sneers at the anti-hero, Cik Leman: '*kebuasan Cik Leman, ayahku yang terhormat itu*' (cruelty of Che Leman, my respected father). In other words, Usman is conveying the message that those who see themselves as better and more honourable people because of their social position can in fact be contemptible. It seems to Usman higher status alone should not be the basis for giving respect to the upper classes. In this, as we have seen, Usman does not spare

royalty from his scrutiny and in fact presents them in as bad a light as possible. As we can see, Usman abhors the base in human nature and more so when it is seen in those who profess to be the leaders of society and when it causes pain and suffering to the people.

In conclusion, Usman Awang's short stories establish him as a reform-minded Malay writer who, for a period of almost three decades, by his pen, unrelentingly fought to improve the lives of poor Malays. A strong social conscience and political consciousness helped to shape the direction of his writings. At the same time, it could be said that his ideological leanings determined, in a large measure, their content. Indeed, the nature of the issues he discusses and the solutions he proposes show that he was much influenced by the socialist ideology. Besides, coming from a poor family and belonging to the '*rakyat*' class, it is not hard to see why Usman's sympathies rested with the masses and the poor who live in distress, difficulty, oppression and injustice and why he was antagonistic towards the establishment, the feudal and aristocratic groups and the rich. Usman's short stories also establish him as a Malay with a modern outlook who sought to remove what he regards as feudal elements in his society.

Usman is well known as a poet, but until now his short stories have not been taken seriously or seen as worthy of scholarly attention. From this study, we can see that a new approach can be applied to examine Usman's short stories not in isolation but in a way that would situate them within the Malay cultural context. The result is a better understanding not only of Malay society, but of the role that a Malay writer has attempted to play in bringing about improvement to his society.

More importantly, in the context of Malay studies, the keywords approach not only provides an understanding of one Malay writer's aspirations through his literary writings but can open up new possibilities of exploring other types of writings such as political or economic. Further, we have seen that the Malay language, as exhibited by Usman in his short stories, is quite rich in its vocabulary of words and expressions which are not merely colourful but can express a range of moods, nuances and subtleties. The keywords approach has shown its capacity to draw out this richness in the Malay language which can only enrich Malay literature and its study.

SHORT STORIES OF USMAN AWANG

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"*Di Sebalik Tabir Budi*" (Behind the Veil of Kindness), *Utusan Zaman*, 1 May.

"*Mulanya Dia Menjadi Mata-mata*" (Why He First Became a Policeman), *Utusan Zaman*, 19 June.

"*Hinakah Aku Mencintai Seniwati?*" (Is It Shameful for Me to Love an Actress?), *Utusan Zaman*, 21 August.

"*Wang Mengatasi Cinta*" (Money is More Important Than Love), *Utusan Zaman*, 9 October.

1950

"*Cinta di Negara Hang Tuah*" (Love in the Land of Hang Tuah), *Utusan Zaman*, 12 February.

"*Sepucuk Surat Cinta*" (A Love Letter), *Utusan Zaman*, 26 March.

"*Isi Sepucuk Surat*" (The Content of a Letter), *Hiburan*, Jilid 139, 15 April, pp. 7-11.

"*Nasib Seorang Ibu Tua*" (The Fate of an Old Mother), *Utusan Zaman*, 7 May.

"*Untuk Jadi Isteri Orang Bangsawan*" (To Be a Nobleman's Wife), *Utusan Zaman*, 17 September. Also published in *Degup Jantung*, Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Melayu Baru, 1963, pp. 41-47.

1951

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"*Menentang*" (Resist), *Mastika*, May, pp. 25-27.

"*Laut tak Bertepi*" (A Sea Without a Shore), *Utusan Zaman*, 20 May.

"*Manusia dan Hidup*" (Mankind and Life), *Utusan Zaman*, 10 June.

"*Kenalan Baru*" (A New Acquaintance), *Utusan Zaman*, 21 October.

"*Surat dari Seorang Teman*" (A Letter from a Friend), *Mutiara*, Bilangan 37, November, pp. 30-31.

"*Terbitnya Matahari Pagi*" (The Morning Sun Rises), *Utusan Zaman*, 25 November.

"*Kejadian di Kampung*" (Incident in a Village), *Utusan Zaman*, 23 December.

1952

"*Menuju Hidup*" (Towards a New Life), *Mutiara*, Bilangan 39, January, pp. 24-26.

"*Dosa*" (Sin), *Mutiara*, Bilangan 42, April, pp. 8-10.

"*Peribadi*" (Character), *Utusan Zaman*, 27 July.

"*Bunga Hidupku*" (The Flower of My Life), *Utusan Zaman*, 24 August.

"*Melihat Bintang-bintang Seni*" (Looking at Talents in the Arts), *Utusan Zaman*, 21 September.

"*Menonton*" (Viewing), *Mastika*, November, pp. 27-29. Also published in *Degup Jantung*, Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Melayu Baru, 1963, pp. 55-62; Dinsman (ed.), *Koleksi Terpilih Sasterawan Negara Usman Awang*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1995, pp. 256-263.

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1953

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1954

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"*Gadis-gadis Jangan Menyanyi di Dapur*" (Women Must Not Sing in the Kitchen), *Utusan Zaman*, 4 April.

"*Beginilah Selalunya dan Demikianlah Selanjutnya*" (This is the Way it is and This is the Way it Will be), *Utusan Zaman*, 16 May.

"*Kisah Pertama*" (First Story), *Mastika*, July, pp. 38-40.

"*Kisah Kedua*" (Second Story), *Mastika*, August, pp. 37-39.

"*Mencari Isteri*" (Looking for a Wife), *Mastika*, September, pp. 32-33.

"*Yang Tempang*" (A Lame Person), *Mastika*, October, pp. 48-50.

"*Mengarang Sebuah Cerita Pendek*" (Writing a Short Story), *Utusan Zaman*, 17 October.

"*Bila Dara Sudah Pergi*" (When Dara has Passed Away), *Mastika*, November, pp. 42-45.

"*Al-Kisah...*" (The Story Begins), *Utusan Zaman*, 21 November.

"*Ayah tak Kembali*" (Father is Not Returning Home), *Mastika*, December, pp. 44-47 & 50.

"*Banjir*" (Flood), *Utusan Zaman*, 19 December.

1955

"*Gadis Sandiwara*" (A Lady of the Theatre), *Bintang*, Bilangan 26, January, pp. 33-35.

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"*Baik Hati*" (Kind Hearted), *Mastika*, April, pp. 40-43.

"*Haslina, Perawan Kesayangan Kampung Kami*" (Haslina, the Darling of Our Village), *Mastika*, May, pp. 46-50. Revised version, "*Haslina*" (Haslina), *Degup Jantung*, Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Melayu Baru, 1963, pp. 83-90.

"*Menyambung Kisah yang Tetap Hidup*" (To Continue a Lively Story), *Utusan Zaman*, 24 July.

"*Undang-undang Darurat*" (Emergency Laws), *Utusan Zaman*, 13 November.

1956

"*Lorong Cantik Penuh Kerikil*" (Beautiful Lane Filled with Pebbles), *Utusan Zaman*, 8 January.

"*Uda dan Dara*" (Uda and Dara), *Mastika*, March, pp. 42-49. Revised version, "*Uda dan Dara*" (Uda and Dara) in Asraf (ed.), *Mekar dan Segar*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1962, pp. 132-153.

"*Tanah yang Kekeringan Benih*" (Land Without A Seed), *Utusan Zaman*, 15 July.

"*Menyambut Lawatan Ketua Tertinggi Barisan*" (Receiving a Visit from the Head of the Association of Youth), *Utusan Zaman*, 18 November.

"*Cerita Sebuah Rumah Batu*" (A Story of a Brick House), *Utusan Zaman*, 9 December.

1957

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1958

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1960

"*Manusia Miskin*" (Poor People), *Berita Harian*, 7 January.

1962

"*Setelah 1948*" (After 1948) in Asraf (ed.), *Mekar dan Segar*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, pp. 125-131.

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- "*Sepintas Lalu di dalam Bas*" (A Glance in the Bus), *Degup Jantung*, Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Melayu Baru, pp. 70-74.
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- "*Dari Johor Baharu ke Kota Tinggi*" (From Johor Baharu to Kota Tinggi), *Degup Jantung*, Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Melayu Baru, pp. 91-96.
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- "*Budi*" (Manners), *Degup Jantung*, Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Melayu Baru, pp. 125-134. Also published in Dinsman (ed.), *Koleksi Terpilih Sasterawan Negara Usman Awang*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1995, pp. 291-300.
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